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MOJO

Classic Magazine

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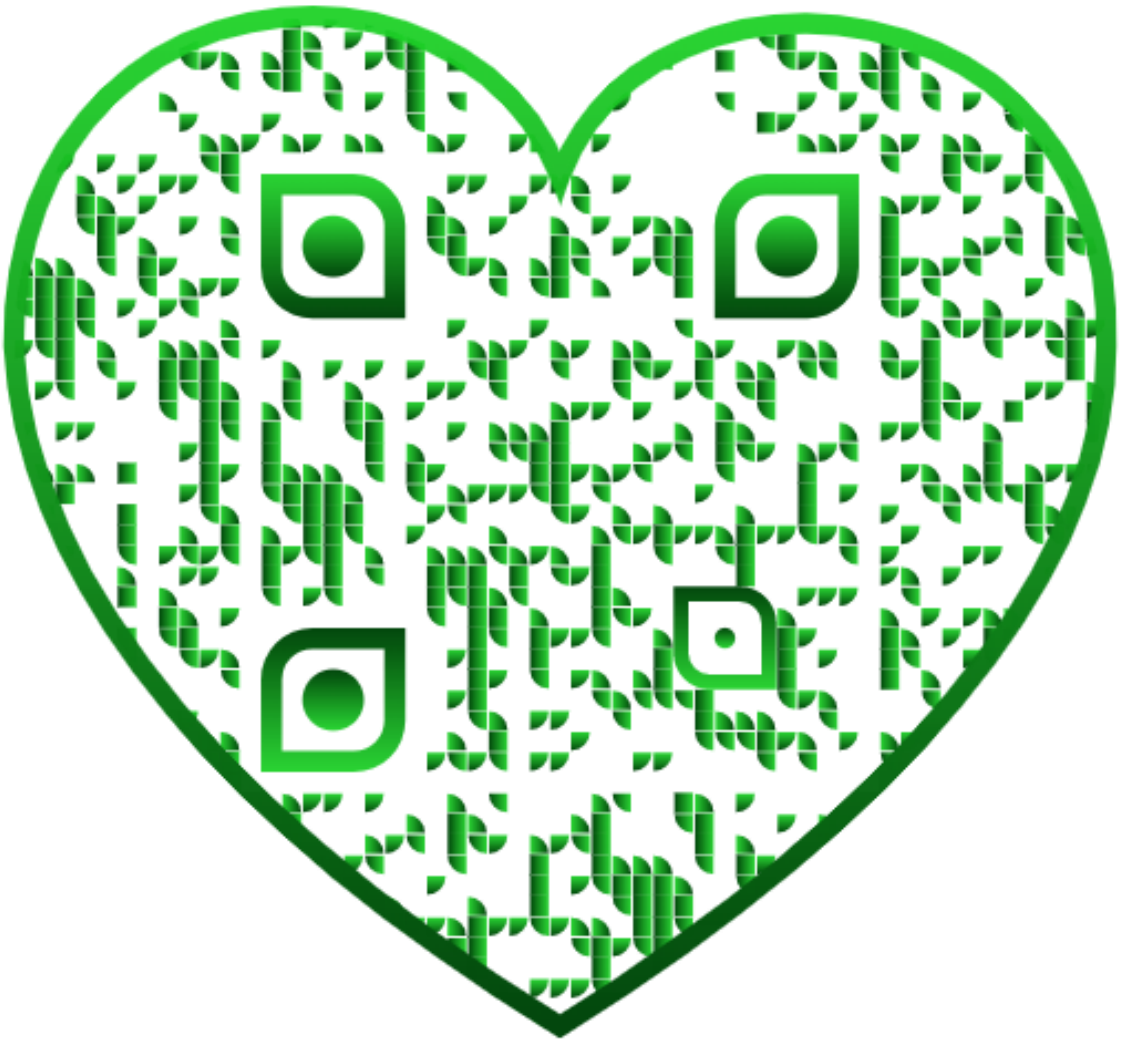

CARGO COLLECTIVE

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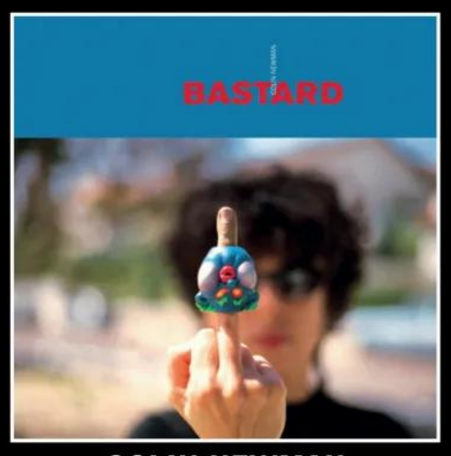


COLIN NEWMAN
BASTARD
SWIM ~ LP / 2CD

A reissue of Colin Newman's 1997 album Bastard. Available on vinyl for the first time. CD version includes a second CD with rare and unreleased tracks.

GUHTS
REGENERATION
NEW HEAVY SOUNDS LP / CD

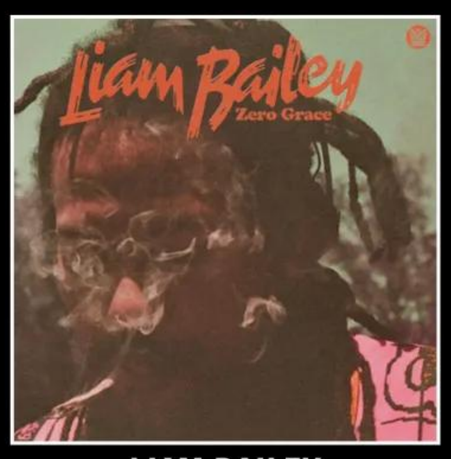
A maelstrom of heavy and intense songs, with a strong feminist streak, cathartic post-metal. A formidable debut for one of the coolest new out there.

SONIC YOUTH
WALLS HAVE EARS
GOOFIN' 2LP / CD

"Culled from 3 1985 gigs in the UK "The Walls Have Ears" appeared / disappeared as a 2LP in 1986, not just a live album but an artful tapestry full of live experimentation with songs, between-song tape segues, darkness, humor & audio verité.

AND ALSO THE TREES
MOTHER-OF-PEARL MOON
AATT LP / CD

AATT are renowned for their captivating live performances, a unique style of mandolin-like electric guitar, evocative lyrics & dark jazz rhythms - not to mention a creative independence fiercely preserved for over 4 decades.



LIAM BAILEY
ZERO GRACE
BIG CROWN RECORDS LP / CD

Liam Bailey's sophomore album on Big Crown Records. Following the success of 2020's Ekundayo album, the tried & true chemistry of Bailey & producer Leon Michels (El Michels Affair) is on full display again as they take the sound they established & push it further.

THE UMBRELLAS
FAIRWEATHER FRIEND
TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

Fairweather Friend' is a bold indie pop triumph, crafted with purpose & attention. Taking their time over each note, the 4 piece have strengthened their songwriting, adding depth & assurance while unlocking their potential.

WILLIAM DOYLE
SPRINGS ETERNAL
TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

William Doyle's most ambitious & most playful creation to date "Springs Eternal" follows 2021's critically acclaimed Great Spans of Muddy Time album (10/10 Loud & Quiet, 9/10 Line of Best Fit, 4/5 Mojo, 8/10 Uncut, 5th The Quietus 100 Albums of the Year)

LAETITIA SADIER
ROOTING FOR LOVE
DUOPHONIC SUPER 45S LP / CD

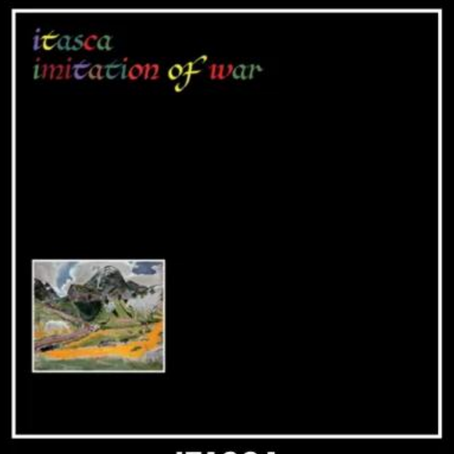
Alongside of her collaboration with Modern Cosmology, last year's incredible What Will You Grow Now?, as well as her continued tours with a reformed Stereolab, Rooting For Love finds Laetitia back in the world.

TORRES
What an Enormous Room
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

"TORRES' music-making is conducted in a melodic vocabulary unique to itself—methods, equipment, circumstances shifting around the impulse to affirm the self within the world..." —Julien Baker

ULTRASONIC GRAND PRIX
INSTAFUZZ
NON DELUX LP / CD

Collaboration from Little Barrie and multi-instrumentalist/producer Shawn Lee- " a riotously fun mix of dirty funk, expansive guitar and sampled preaching" Uncut



ITASCA
IMITATION OF WAR
PARADISE OF BACHELORS LP / CD

On Imitation of War, co-produced by Robbie Cody (Wand), Kayla Cohen advances Itasca into rockier, more guitar-forward terrain, with a suite of smoky nocturnes surveying mythologies both classical and personal.

KALI MALONE
ALL LIFE LONG
IDEOLOGIC ORGAN 2LP / CD

Long awaited new solo album of composition for choir, pipe organ & brass ensemble, following her acclaimed breakthrough album "The Sacrificial Code". Over the course of 12 pieces, harmonic themes & patterns recur, presented in altered forms & for varied instrumentation.

MARY TIMONY
UNTAME THE TIGER
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

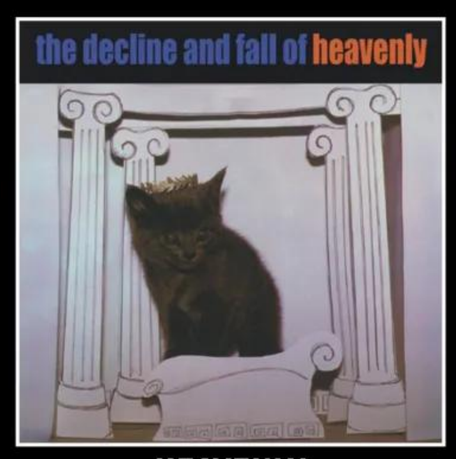
"The ferociously brilliant Mary Timony has been rewriting the guitar rulebook for three decades." — Rolling Stone, The 250 Greatest Guitarists of All Time.

EMAHOY TSEGE MARIAM GEBRU
SOUVENIRS
MISSISSIPPI LP / CD

The first vocal album by beloved Ethiopian nun, composer, and pianist Emahoy Tsege Mariam Gebru - profound and deeply moving home cassette recordings made amidst political upheaval and turmoil.

TEETHE
TEETHE
WINSPEAR LP / CD

Teethe is a slowcore band from Texas. Their debut album is a sonic collage of fragmented recordings made whole during isolation. The album's warm, lo-fi aesthetic & slow, calming songs are a remedy for the overstimulation of modern times.



HEAVENLY
THE DECLINE AND FALL OF HEAVENLY
SKEP WAX RECORDS LP

Skep Wax Records are re-issuing all 4 Heavenly albums over a 2 year period. This is the 3rd instalment. Each LP includes relevant single releases as bonus tracks, a 7" booklet with lyrics, pictures, & new sleeve notes by the band.

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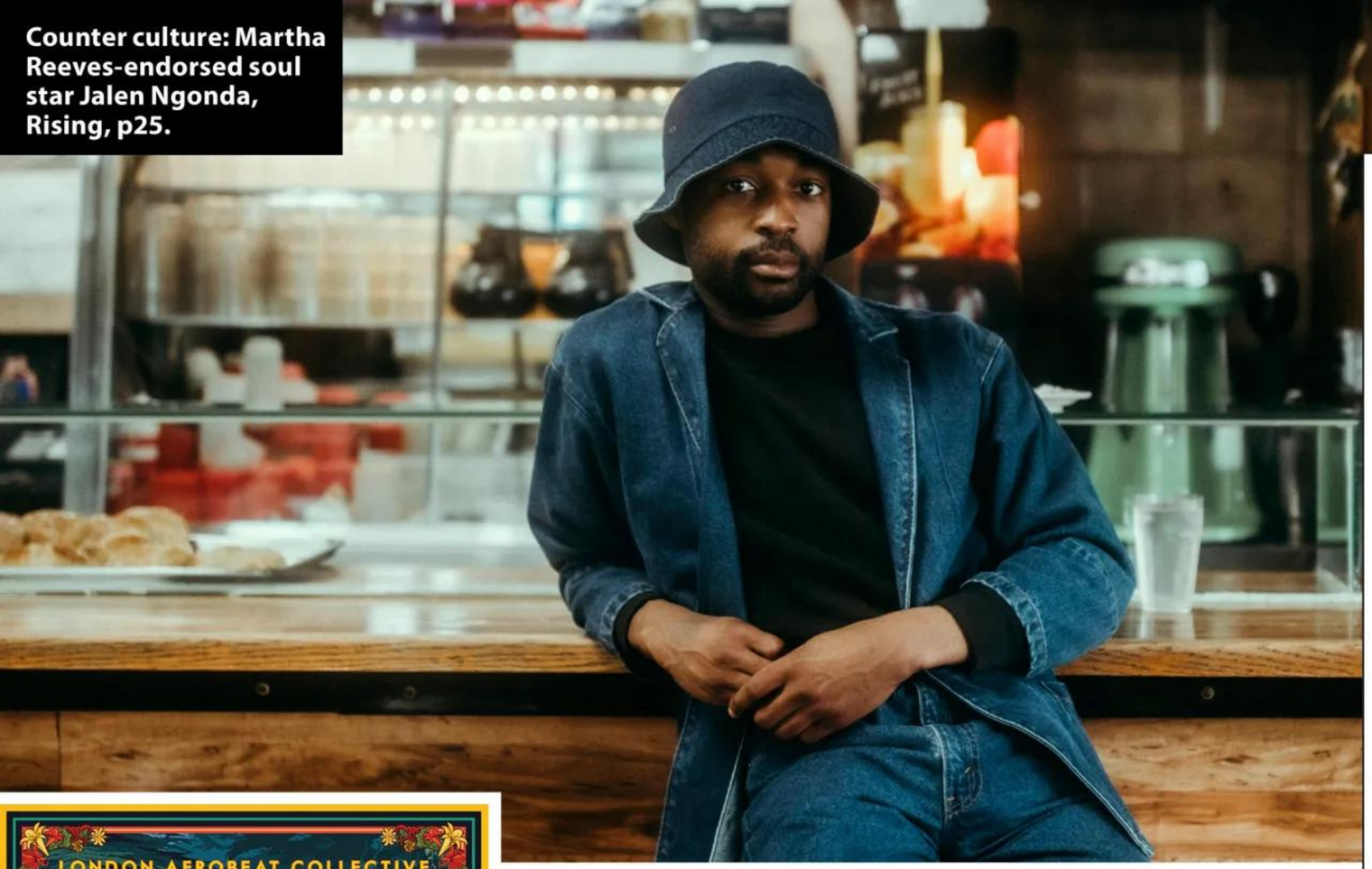
Tom Sheehan



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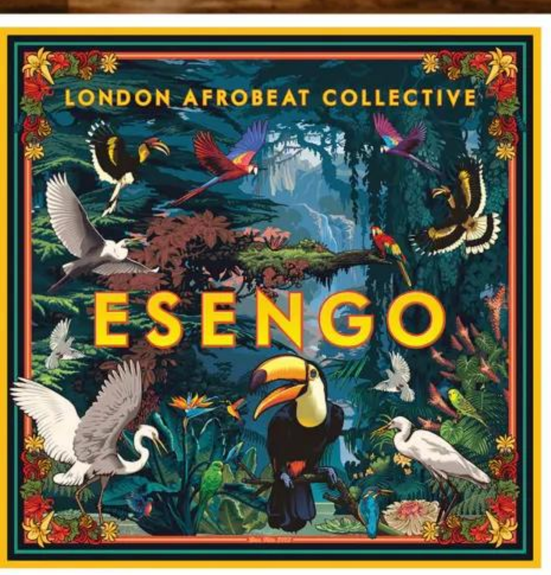

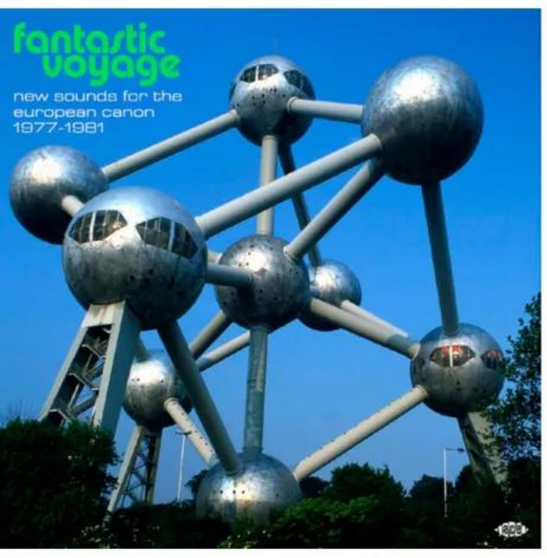

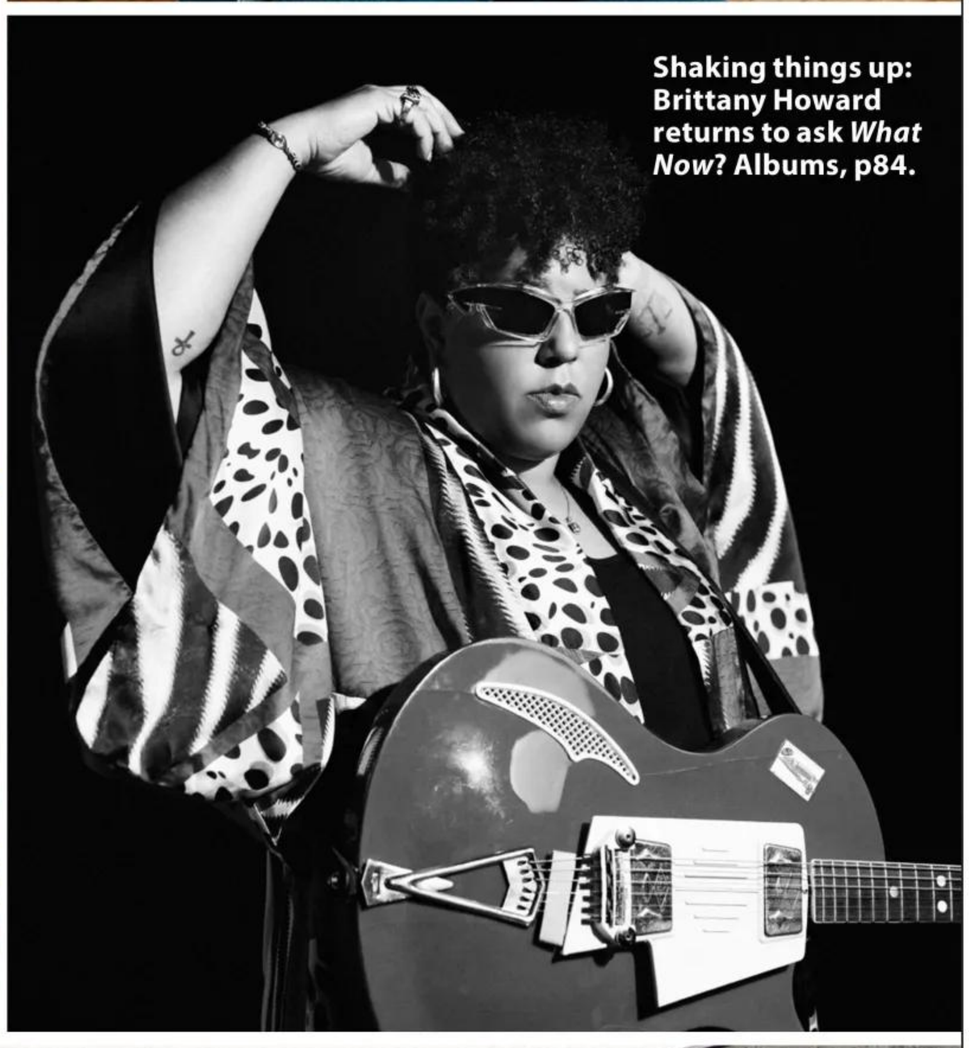

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MOJO

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80 NEW ALBUMS Idles roll out their *Tangk*, plus The Smile, Brittany Howard, Hurray For The Riff Raff, Real Estate and more.

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THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...

Daniel de Visé

Daniel has written five books, which have been translated into Spanish, German, Dutch and Estonian. His last book, the B.B. King biography King Of The Blues, was longlisted for the 2022 PEN America award in biography. He adapts from his latest, about The Blues Brothers, the movie and the band, from p40.

Ann Scanlon

Raised in a pub with a classic Irish & country jukebox, it was inevitable that Ann would fall in love with The Pogues. She wrote their first biography, The Lost Decade, and had a lifetime of adventures with Shane MacGowan, including a day out in The Rovers Return on Coronation Street. Read her tribute on p46.

Clive Arrowsmith

Shooting for Vogue, Nova, Vanity Fair and more, The Beatles' art school contemporary has taken iconic portraits of Mick Jagger, Jeff Beck, L.S. Lowry and The Dalai Lama. His shots of Paul McCartney, Wings and for the *Band On The Run* sleeve, feature from p68 and on this month's cover.

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Bill Ryder-Jones

Iechyd Da

LP, CD & Digital
Out Now

Domino

JET POWERED POP!

15 SKY-SCRAPING SONGS BY XTC, TEENAGE FANCLUB, THE LEMON TWIGS, SUSANNA HOFFS & MATTHEW SWEET AND MORE

1 THE BOTH
MILWAUKEE

An unfamiliar group name, perhaps, but The Both are actually notable solo artists Aimee Mann and Ted Leo, who began to collaborate on a joint tour in 2012. Milwaukee, from their 2014 album, commemorates the start of that partnership while on the road in Wisconsin, "and a show where the whole front row was taking pictures of itself."

Written by Aimee Mann and Ted Leo. Aimee Mann published by Downtown Music Publishing. Ted Leo Published by Huan, Hound of Valiner Music. From *The Both* by The Both (SuperEgo Records). Featured performers Aimee Mann and Ted Leo

2 THE dB'S
THAT TIME IS GONE

The late '70s proved a fertile time for a new, wiry, punk-informed iteration of powerpop, exemplified by Peter Holsapple and Chris Stamey's dB's. The band split in 1985, but picked up where they left off for this groovy 2012 reunion.

Written by Peter Holsapple. Published by Hospital Music, admin. by Rough Trade Songs BMI. Peter Holsapple, guitars, Chris Stamey, organ, Gene Holder, bass, Will Rigby, drums and percussion. Produced by the dB's. Recorded by George Cowan at Water Music Recorders, Hoboken, NJ. Mixed by Scott Litt. Mastered by Greg Calbi at Sterling Sound, NY

3 YOUNG GUV
COULDN'T LEAVE U IF I TRIED

Jangles aplenty now, from the undersung Young Guv, AKA New Mexico's Ben Cook, who's been pumping out suitably sunkissed albums since 2019. Couldn't Leave U If I Tried betrays Cook's penchant for Prince-style spelling, but also the foundational glory of The Byrds. Those of you who've been waiting 34 years for a second La's album might like this one, too.

Written by Benjamin Peter Warden Cook (45%/ Thomas Yorke 45%/Ryan Gavel 10%). From *GUV III* (Run For Cover Records); runforcoverrecords.com

4 THE LONG RYDERS
I CAN'T HIDE

LA's Long Ryders – featuring sometime MOJO contributor Sid Griffin – might be best known for emerging out of their hometown's psychedelic Paisley Underground and parlaying their love of Gram Parsons into rollicking new Americana. They could also, though, be magically adept powerpoppers: check this faithful Flamin' Groovies cover, recorded around the time of their 1984 debut album, *Native Sons*.

Written by Chris Wilson, Cyril Jordan. Warner Chappell North America Ltd. ℗2011 Cherry Red Records Ltd GBHUM1102419

Steve Gullick, Eva Chambers, Phil Marino, JJ Gonson, Paul Natkin/ Getty, Carles Rodriguez

9 GIGOLO AUNTS
SERIOUS DRUGS

A 1993 indie-rock classic by Glasgow's BMX Bandits (co-written by Norman Blake), there's a good argument that the definitive version of Serious Drugs was actually recorded later that year by New York state's Gigolo Aunts (note the Syd Barrett reference). Two years later, they would hit the charts with Where I Find My Heaven after the song was featured in the Jim Carrey gross-out caper, Dumb And Dumber.

Written by BMX Bandits. Published by Complete Music Ltd. ℗1993 Fire Records and ©1993 Fire Records. From the EP Full-On Bloom

10 TEENAGE FANCLUB
FOREIGN LAND

Gigolo Aunts notwithstanding, no band – with the possible exception of The Posies – did more to honour the Big Star sound in the 1990s than Teenage Fanclub. Over 30 years since their debut, the Fannies continue to find warmth and nuance in that harmony-drenched formula, with this Norman Blake gem from 2023's *Nothing Lasts Forever* a particular keeper.

Written by Norman Blake. From *Nothing Lasts Forever*. ℗&©PeMa 2023. Published by Kobalt Music. www.teenagefanclub.com

11 HEATMISER
REVOLUTION

Revisiting the work of his '90s band Heatmiser recently, co-frontman Neil Gust told MOJO that the Portland, Oregon group had "an explosive chemistry and a tremendously infectious momentum. We were *awesome*." That's writ large on this early-'90s cover of the Fabs classic, with Gust's foil Elliott Smith well to the fore. From Third Man's essential 2023 comp, *Music Of Heatmiser*.

Written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney. Published by Northern Song Ltd admin by Sony/ ATV Tunes (ASCAP)

12 GAZ COOMBES
LONG LIVE THE STRANGE

If Teenage Fanclub represented one strain of '90s British powerpop, a giddier and punkier take was brought to the party by Oxford's Supergrass, a trio with much wider tastes than most of their Britpop contemporaries. Supergrass haven't made an album since 2008, but frontman Gaz Coombes has quietly continued to make good ones solo – Exhibit A: this elegiac pounder from 2023's *Turn The Car Around*.

Written by Gaz Coombes From *Turn The Car Around*. Published by Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd. ℗&©2023 Gaz Coombes Ltd

"POWERPOP IS WHAT WE PLAY," PETE TOWNSHEND told the NME's Keith Altham in May 1967, coining a new name for the fabbest of genres. "[It's] what the Small Faces used to play, and the kind of pop The Beach Boys played in the days of Fun Fun Fun, which I preferred."

What, though, did powerpop become? As the division between pop and rock became ever more pronounced in the '70s, The Who, with their stadium brawn, their conceptually intricate rock operas, seemed to stray some distance away from the idea. Powerpop was concise, zippy, painted in bright colours. It was not averse to angst, as Big Star would testify, but the pain was generally delivered with an often overwhelming melodic sweetness. Powerpop was the sound of The Beatles, and specifically the genius of Paul McCartney, supercharged: a jangling, gushing kind of guitar music that would prove addictive, indestructible.

What better way, then, to augment a Wings cover story than with *Jet Powered Pop!*? This is MOJO's finely-tuned compilation of powerpop wonder-workers, from '70s trailblazers to brand new torchbearers of that sugar-coated sound, with a few choice Beatles and Wings covers thrown in for good measure. "Hope you're having fun?" That's the plan!

5 BRENDAN BENSON
LET ME ROLL IT

An assiduous student of pop classicism, Brendan Benson's excellent version of the *Band On The Run* burner came out as part of his Metarie EP in 2003. Within a couple of years, the Detroiter would be playing Paul McCartney to Jack White's John Lennon at the front of The Raconteurs.

Written by Paul James McCartney and Linda Louise McCartney (PRS/ASCAP). Published by MPL Communications inc. (ASCAP). ℗&©2023 The Noise Company under exclusive license from Startime International. www.brendanbenson.com www.thenoisecompany.com

6 XTC
I'M THE MAN WHO MURDERED LOVE

An expert at channelling The Beatles' capacity for strangeness, Andy Partridge also knew his way around a punchy should've-been-a-hit when the mood took him. 2000's *Wasp Star* LP is often perceived as a leftovers collection, but superb songs lurk there. A case in point: I'm The Man Who Murdered Love, right up there with the band's very best.

Written by Andy Partridge. From *Wasp Star - Apple Venus, Volume Two*. ℗2000 XTC. Under license to Ape House Ltd. Published by Warner Chappell. Appears courtesy of XTC/Ape House Ltd

7 THE LEMON TWIGS
IN MY HEAD

For nearly a decade, Long Island's precocious D'Addario brothers have built a reputation as twin Todd Rundgrens, gifted tunesmiths with a glut of wild ideas – note 2018's *Go To School* concept LP about an educated chimpanzee. 2023's *Everything Harmony*, however, leaned into their purest instincts – hence this ravishing evocation of The Beach Boys.

Written by Brian D'Addario, Michael D'Addario. Published by Martucci Brothers LLC adm. Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing, ℗&©2023 Captured Tracks. From *Everything Harmony* (Captured Tracks) capturedtracks.com

8 THOSE PRETTY WRONGS
SCREAM

Last year, Jody Stephens told MOJO how he'd almost joined Wings. He was already, though, powerpop royalty, having drummed for Big Star, and it's a noble legacy he pursues to this day in Those Pretty Wrongs alongside Luther Russell. The chamber pop of Scream is from their third LP, 2023's *Holiday Camp*.

Written by Jody Stephens & Luther Russell. Music Publisher: @2023 Way Down South Songs, BMI/ Ungawa Music, ASCAP. Producer: Jody Stephens & Luther Russell ℗&©Curation Records, Inc. Label: Curation. From *Holiday Camp*

13 SHOES
CAPITAL GAIN

Zion, Illinois' kings of DIY powerpop, Shoes honed their sound in their bedrooms rather than in the spotlight. 1977's *Black Vinyl Shoes* was recorded in the living room of bassist and guitarist John and Jeff Murphy's parents: Capital Gain, from that LP, sounds like a punk-infused Cheap Trick. Soon enough, Shoes would become a slicker proposition: four of their videos were shown by MTV on the channel's opening night in 1981.

Written by Jeff Murphy. BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd ℗1977 Shoes GBBLY1803233

14 NADA SURF
THE WAY YOU WEAR YOUR HEAD

NY's Nada Surf had tasted success in the '90s before, dropped by a major, they re-formed to make 2002's *Let Go*. "The best kind of powerpop," wrote MOJO's Andrew Male of the reissue, "where damaged bachelor tales of romantic failure, self-pity and drunkenness are invested with sweet harmonies, and uplifting melodies of underserved romanticism."

Written by Caws, Lorca, Elliot. Published by Karmacode (BMI) and Songs as Pets (ASCAP). ℗&©2002 Nada Surf. From *Let Go* (Nada Surf). www.nadasurf.com

15 SUSANNA HOFFS & MATTHEW SWEET
AND YOUR BIRD CAN SING

One last Beatles tribute for the road, as Bangles legend Susanna Hoffs teams up with Matthew Sweet for this exquisitely-crafted version of the *Revolver* song. From Hoffs and Sweet's 2006 album, *Under The Covers*, which also featured them tackling songs by The Zombies, The Left Banke and The Beach Boys, plus The Who's The Kids Are Alright.

Written by Lennon/McCartney. Sony/ATV Publishing 1966. ℗&©2006 Shout! Factory, LLC. From *Under the Covers, Vol. 1* (Shout! Factory); www.shoutfactory.com

"IT WAS A REAL ACT OF FAITH. IT WAS CRAZY, ACTUALLY." PAUL McCARTNEY SPREADS HIS WINGS STARTS PAGE 68

MOJO's definitive companion to Kate Bush's albums, songs, books and videos. Available Now!

www.greatmagazines.co.uk/mojo-specials

Anna Calvi

ART ROCKER, PEAKY BLINDERS SOUNDTRACKER

What music are you currently grooving to?

Mitski's *The Land Is Inhospitable And So Are We*. Her melodies are really strong and I love her voice. I saw her do a stripped-back show in north London recently and even just on guitar, these songs are like mountains.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

David Bowie's *Aladdin Sane*. I bought it when I was nine and it changed my life. The chord changes, the melodies, his incredible face. I was completely bewitched. The piano playing by Mike Garson is amazing. I got to duet with him a couple of years ago which meant so much to me.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

It was *Aladdin Sane*! I saved up my pocket money and I think I bought it in HMV. The first song I ever heard by David Bowie was Space Oddity in the car with my dad and I remember laughing because it sounded so strange. But by the end I was completely in love.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Jeff Buckley was always my hero, as he was so in command of his guitar and voice. His musicianship was pure expression.

What do you sing in the shower?

I never do! But if I did maybe I'd sing opera, some **Maria Callas**.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Some classic **Björk**, maybe her record *Post*. I like how playful it is.

And your Sunday morning record?

Promises by **Floating Points** and **Pharoah Sanders**. Such a great record to get lost in when you want some alone time.

Anna Calvi's Peaky Blinders: Season 5 & 6 (Original Score) is released on double album and CD via Domino Soundtracks on January 26.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Bruce Dickinson

IRON MAIDEN'S FLYER, BREWER, FENCER

What music are you currently grooving to?

Kreator, **Rammstein**, **Taylor Swift** and **Gustav Holst**. It was on a long-haul flight and Air France had a very eclectic library.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Deep Purple In Rock. It was the second album I ever bought. *Black Sabbath* was the third. It was a message from God.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

First record was a CBS sampler LP at an auction at my boarding school. It was called *Fill Your Head With Rock* and it was 50p. Technically I owned **Johnny Kidd & The Pirates**' I'll Never Get Over You, **The Beatles**' I Want To Hold Your Hand – I preferred the B-side – and **Chubby Checker**, Let's Twist Again. I was only five or thereabouts.

John McMurtrie, Andrew Fox/Guardian/Eyevine

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Ritchie Blackmore and **Paganini**. Both 'men in black', but one thought of it first and the other played guitar. Both are genius.

What do you sing in the shower?

Deeedummmmdiddydoododlooow-olfopuss… or similar. Anything else scares the cat. Which is why we do not have a cat.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Frankenstein. **Edgar Winter**. Makes me want to jump around and break stuff. I am certainly not advocating smashing up other people's property, but recycling is another method of creative destruction. I once crushed a row of cars decorated with Take That posters whilst driving a Chieftain tank.

And your Sunday morning record?

Dust In The Wind. **Kansas**. But only after lunch. Sunday mornings are a very slow start… coffee… ginger shot… a long slow porridge… find an old Hammer to watch on replay if in the UK… or an Alain Delon film noir sponsored by whatever tobacco he smoked if in France. Can't tell you any names, but if Terence Fisher directed… it was good.

Bruce's The Mandrake Project LP is released on BMG Records on March 1. The Mandrake Project Tour begins in Mexico in April.

Hans-Joachim Roedelius

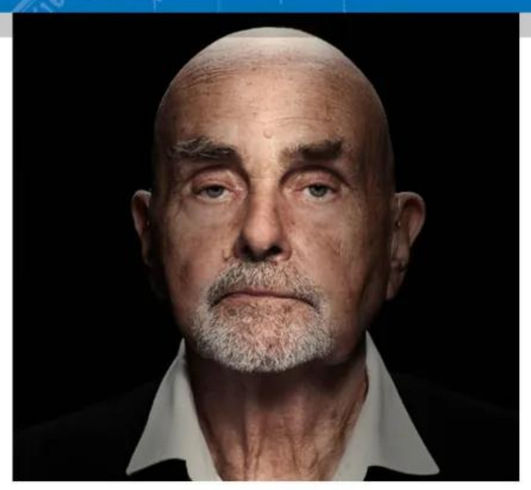
CLUSTER/HARMONIA KOSMISCHE ELDER

What music are you currently grooving to?

My own and those which I'm doing with my friends and colleagues such as Arnold Kasar, Christopher Chaplin, Tim Story, Carl Michael Von Hausswolff, Sebastian Boecking, Onnen Bock, Dallas Acid, Manuel Göttsching – a live concert in Berlin's HAU Theater in 2021, unfortunately not released yet – and some of my yet-unreleased solo stuff that Grönland Records will release for my ninetieth birthday next year. Because I'm overloaded with my own work, and many different projects, there is not much time to listen to music. In general, I only listen whilst driving my car, and then classical music mostly.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

My own music? This would be *Wenn Der Südwind Weht* from 1981, *Zensibility* with Arnold Kasar, which has just come out, and *Lunz* from 2002 and *4Hands* from 2022, both with Tim Story. And one track on Víkingur Ólafsson's LP *Bach Reworks*,



Bach mit Zumutungen, from 2019.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

To be honest, I never actually bought albums, but I did listen to some at friends' houses.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

I have never wanted to be anyone but myself. I am an autodidact, but my teachers include composers such as **Beethoven**, **Satie**, **Rachmaninoff**, **Tchaikovsky**, **Debussy**, visual artists, writers, poets… visionaries who were at one with their work.

What do you sing in the shower?

I'm not singing in the shower. But I am singing whilst performing.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

I have no Saturday night record.

And your Sunday morning record?

I'm walking the dog and listening to the birds in the trees, so the sounds from nature are my Sunday morning record. I also go to church, so I listen to organ playing and choral singing.

Zensibility by Roedelius & Arnold Kasar is out now on 7K!.

> "To be honest, I never actually bought albums."
>
> HANS-JOACHIM ROEDELIUS

MOJO

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"HEROES LIVE FOREVER," IS HOW SPIDER

Stacy ends the memorial to Shane MacGowan that we're so proud to include in this month's MOJO. But it's also a guiding principle for much of what we do every month: old music and musicians, whether legendary or lost, often remain as vital as the new music and musicians we present alongside them in all of our issues.

This month's castlist, then, celebrates relative newcomers like Idles, Brittany Howard, Hurray For The Riff Raff, Real Estate, Jalen Ngonda, ØXN and the pan-continental, all-female supergroup Les Amazones D'Afrique. We catch up with two sets of fractious real brothers in The Jesus And Mary Chain and The Black Crowes, and one set of fake ones – The Blues Brothers. We discover the tragedy behind Granddaddy's comeback, hear from John Cooper Clarke and long-absent Style Councillor Dee C Lee, spend some quality time with Yes man Jon Anderson, and rewind all the way back to the dawn of the Britbeat boom with the indestructible Shadows.

We also find room for one more old friend in the shape of Paul McCartney, calling from Brazil for a lengthy and emotional chat mere hours after the death of Denny Laine. If anyone has a handle on cultural immortality, it must be McCartney. But this month he revisits a time of post-Beatle anxiety, when initial responses to Wings had left him feeling like "it was us against the world". Heroes live forever, for sure, but even the most powerful are shaped by the challenges they face along the way.

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

Captain, would you enlighten the sheriff please?

Thank you for the celebratory article on Lankum [MOJO 362] as they bring their brand of Irish folk music to the world. *False Lankum* has catapulted them into the mainstream for now and is currently playing as I write this. Jim Wirth's coverage of John Flynn and Lisa O'Neill perfectly added to the new wave coming out of Ireland. However, as a follower of Irish folk music, I was surprised at the omission of The High Kings. These guys are a band that have been flying the flag for the genre since 2008 and are currently touring their album *The Road Not Taken* around the world. Spotify Wrapped showed The High Kings at 42 million streams in 2023 – 42 million! That's more than the other artists combined and the most of any artist in the genre. So how have they not been mentioned by Jim Wirth?

I'm not comparing The High Kings to Lankum as they're a much more uplifting form of folk, or putting a question mark on the credibility of a really good article. But surely if the piece is about the present and future of Irish folk music then it's either a massive boo-boo, or even worse, a deliberate omission due to their successful mainstream popularity and following? There's another, more fun side to Ireland as well as the Lankum side. It's not all doom and gloom.

Holly MacArthy, via e-mail

You've no idea what finding this has meant to me

I've been a subscriber for a number of years now, and a regular reader for a lot longer, but nothing has made me as happy as MOJO 363. At last: a Stevie Wonder article! My ultimate musical hero, who has been seriously lacking in the pages of your magazine. Now, how about Prince getting similar treatment?

Martin Kempster, via e-mail

...Big thanks to all those involved with the feature on Stevie Wonder, a long-overdue appreciation which was gratefully received and digested. On the subject of album runs, I'd argue that along with Stevie Wonder, a

discussion on the Miles Davis period from 1968-1972 would help pass the time in a pub.

Paul Kay, Christchurch, Dorset

You will proceed to the more vital areas

A small correction to your otherwise always excellent magazine. In MOJO 363's Bill Ryder-Jones interview, EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation And Reprocessing) doesn't "recover buried memories". It is a form of psychotherapy that helps you process and recover from past experiences that are affecting your mental health and wellbeing.

Dr Tim Sales, Consultant Psychiatrist in East ATS, EBCMHC, Brighton And Hove

There are two ways to disable a crocodile, you know

Thanks guys for your effin' great magazine. I'm always amazed at the thought that goes into actually constructing each issue. For example, I love the wonderful contrast in MOJO 362. On the one hand, there's Geddy Lee of one of my all-time faves, Rush, saying, "I'm most proud of our unwillingness to compromise." These guys always stood for integrity. Then, in the same issue, there's Bono doing one of his usual Twister-like contortions to try and somehow appear anti-establishment (he loves to use the word "punk" when talking about the band), while simultaneously defending his decision to play in the Las Vegas Sphere because, "You've got to keep the magic carpet ride going." What, does he need the money? Can't get any other gigs? I'll take Geddy Lee any effin' day.

Andreas Heller, Lake Constance, Germany

I got my own plans for you, baby

I always read you with *joie* and *plaisir* since the 1990s. I'm a French singer-songwriter and I'm always greedy for old and new musical discoveries. I saw The Lemon Twigs, and they're one of the most fantastic bands I've seen on-stage. Their musicality, engagement, and talent are astounding. *Everything Harmony*, their last album, is a melodic cornucopia. They are moving, and very smart, and always have something cool to say about records. Why don't you give them more space in MOJO? I think they deserve it.

Hugo Chastanet, Clisson, France

I feel very tempted to test that theory right now

In MOJO 355, the otherwise excellent feature on The Chambers Brothers uses a photo from the Newport stage that identifies the great Maria Muldaur as Joan Baez. And come to think of it, Maria – who is still making wonderful roots albums today – is long overdue for a feature in MOJO. What a story she has to tell! Long before Midnight At The Oasis she was making great music with Jim Kweskin and others.

Jim Motavalli, via e-mail

A man comes. He travels quickly. He has purpose.

Your man Grayson Haver Currin is on fire at the moment. His Dolly Parton interview and the eulogy to Robbie Robertson [MOJO 360] are filled with insight, empathy and depth. And the look back at Gram Parsons [MOJO 359] did what truly great articles in your mag do: send the reader back to the records. Sleepless Nights and Love Hurts had me in bits all over again as his and Emmylou's twin souls met each other in heartbreaking music. He also sent me to *The Complete Reprise Sessions* for live radio versions, for which I am extremely grateful.

Phil Bird, via e-mail

…Thanks for the great tribute to the late Robbie Robertson, but there was one glaring omission in the listing of his greatest jams: all of *Rock Of Ages*, The Band's concert album, with superbly played horns added to their best songs, arranged by Allen Toussaint. The songs come newly alive, and Robertson himself once called it the record he was most proud of. For me, likely the greatest live rock album of them all.

Steve Heilig, San Francisco

Secret agent? On whose side?

Thanks for the article on Warren Zevon, a much overlooked songwriter [MOJO 362]. Years ago, when I was a huge fan of the novels of Ross Macdonald, I told my wife that if Zevon wrote books he would write Macdonald, and if Ross was a musician he'd write Zevon. Then *Bad Luck Streak In Dancing School* came out, dedicated to Ken Millar, Macdonald's real name. It was one of those rare moments when you realise you are not living in a vacuum, that there is a coherence to one's life. I am grateful to them both.

Rod Eggleton, via e-mail

He's an Englishman working in co-operation with our boys

You missed a trick in your excellent history of AC/DC's early years [MOJO 363]. Bon Scott's birthplace, Kirriemuir, is – of course it is – in the Scottish county of ANGUS!

Francis Mansell, London

…On the letters page of MOJO 363, the quotes are from the first Iron Man movie. Thunderstruck by AC/DC is used for Iron Man's introduction in the sequel. Up until the Stevie Wonder feature, I thought the best albums run was surely The Rolling Stones from *Beggar's Banquet* to *Exile On Main St*. Now I'm wavering. Keep up the great work!

Steve Mappley, Maidenhead

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Let It Reid

The Jesus And Mary Chain return with *Glasgow Eyes*. Plus! Memoir, documentary and headbutt news.

"WE LOVE doing what we do," says the Jesus And Mary Chain singer Jim Reid from his home in Devon. "But we're so fucking lazy. We were back in the '80s, and we were in the '90s. It gets to a point where you just think, You have to get up off your arse and do something."

He's talking about the group's new LP *Glasgow Eyes*, their first since 2017's *Damage And Joy*, which arrives in March. Its title was inspired by brother William's sleeve image. "William's gotten into digital art and stuff like that," says Jim. "He was doing images for the front cover, and it was kind of a fucked-up picture, someone's eyes were all sort of distorted and scored out. He was interested in making the title something to do with Glasgow, because we were recording there, and it's where it all kind of began."

"A good chunk" was done shortly before Covid hit. With various pieces later recorded by Jim in Devon and William at home in Arizona, a breakthrough accompanied a move to Mogwai's Castle Of Doom studio, a former Victorian bank in Finnieston, early in 2023.

"It's a fantastic studio and a lovely building," says Reid. "I kept saying, The control room's like the Starship Enterprise or something, I felt like Captain Kirk in this big revolving chair in front of this control console. The gear they've got in there is just incredible. From about February onwards 'til about May, it was pretty intensive. It had been a bit bitty, just sketches and stuff, and it wasn't until we hit Glasgow that it really started to feel like a record – like, Hey, it's the Mary Chain!"

He admits his idea of the group in 2024 may not be the same as everybody else's. "There's a lot of electronic sounds on it," Jim says. "I mean, some of William's guitar playing, I think, veers into jazz almost. It's the Mary Chain gone experimental, I suppose. To me, it just sounds like the Mary Chain, but, as usual, there'll be people that are totally satisfied and gloriously happy with it, and, if you look on these little social media threads, there'll be people who want to kill us for destroying the myth of the Mary Chain. It's hard. *We* like it, and if people get into it, as our old American manager used to say (*adopts raspy, seen-it-all voice*), 'Hey, that's *gravy*!'"

The siblings' famously combustive interactions are also examined. Lead single Jamcod (that's JAMC-O.D., rather than 'Jam Cod' as BBC 6Music had it) relates to William's departure after a disastrous 15-minute show at Los Angeles' House Of Blues in September 1998.

"So many people ask about that night that the shit hit the fan and it all blew up that I just thought, Let's put it in a song and maybe they'll stop asking," says Jim. "We found out where the boundaries were then, that if you step over that line, it's going to be World War Three, and there *was* World War Three in the '90s. Now I know that if I say certain things, there will be consequences, and so does he, so when it's getting a bit heated, we'll just back off, give each other a bit of space.

"The problem lies when it comes to ➢

Kevin Cummins/Getty, Mel Butler

"There'll be people who want to kill us for destroying the myth of the Mary Chain."
JIM REID

Back in the driving seat: JAMC's Jim (left) and William Reid in 1989; (left) William and Jim today, still finding something "vaguely magical" about making a new record.

Breaking the Chain: Jim and (left) William Reid on the tour where they "found out where their boundaries were", Electric Ballroom, Camden, London, April 27, 1998; (below) a backstage pass for the gig where it all happened; (inset) LPs *Psychocandy* (1985), *Damage And Joy* (2017) and the forthcoming *Glasgow Eyes*.

drinking and stuff like that," he goes on. "Because once you start drinking, all of that seems like a good idea. There are pretty heated arguments when we've both had a couple of jars. I was drinking during the recording of this record and I've since stopped again… you've still got your eye on that line in the sand and you know that if you step over it, there's going to be trouble. We're sitting on top of Guy Fawkes' barrels of dynamite, smoking cigars, thinking, Fuck, we better be careful. Because I know what can happen."

THAT SAID, Jim acknowledges the creative fuel provided by extreme experience, even if it is retrospective. "I'm sitting on my couch wearing a pair of slippers with daytime TV on mute right now," he says. "I mean, that doesn't make for a great song. So thinking back to the times where it was like, you get up in the morning and the day was successful if I hooked up with somebody who was going to sell me drugs… you were basically acting totally on instinct, and it was *all* about getting drugs. The humanity got sucked out for a while, I suppose – the idea of drugs and glamour is totally a myth. So that was [album track] Chemical Animal."

Songs including The Eagles And The Beatles and Hey Lou Reid are, hears MOJO, for William to explain. "A lot of these songs are just like us looking back on times gone by, to the period before the band," says Jim, "when we were looking for an inroad, to get the band together." Elsewhere, Fay Fife from The Rezillos guests on Venal Joy, and Jim's girlfriend Rachel Conte duets with him on Girl 71.

While the album creation process is a painful one ("I have to say I hate it"), it's balanced with positivity. "When you go into a studio and make a record, it's like you're trying to *will* about 25 butterflies into a jar with your mind control," Jim says. "You're thinking, Is this happening? And then the fucking butterflies just land in the jar one day, and you're like, Wow, we've done that, again! There's something vaguely magical about making a record – at the end, when you're playing it back, you think, Well… here we are again."

There's more JAMC activity to come. A British and European tour begins in March, while Jim Reid's memoir Never Understand: The Story Of The Jesus And Mary Chain, written with MOJO contributor Ben Thompson, hits the shelves in August. "It's got plenty of warts, I can assure you of that," says Jim. "In fact, I think it might be all warts. It's pretty much our story. There are bits I wish I could go back and change but we can't, so you have to live with it. Hopefully, people will find bits of that amusing and informative. People will take from it what they want, I don't care."

A longer-term prospect is a documentary by filmmaker and JAMC video director Ben Unwin. "That's pretty much still at the idea stage," says Jim. "We said, If you can make it so it doesn't look like one of those boring-as-fuck talking head documentaries with people waffling on about how things used to be, and make it Mary Chain-relevant now, fuck it, let's do it." As of now, there are no plans to mark the 40th anniversary of the JAMC's seismic debut *Psychocandy* in 2025, though Reid notes, "never say never. We had to be persuaded to do it a few years ago, but weirdly, we both enjoyed it."

The magnitude of the JAMC in their fifth decade is a concept not lost on him. "If someone would have told the twentysomething Reid brothers that they'd still be doing this in our sixties, I think they would have been pissing themselves laughing – actually, they might've jumped off a bridge. Now, it's much more acceptable to be an old dude in a rock'n'roll band. And you know, I always had a thing that I would stop doing it if it felt undignified. I still enjoy it, people still come, and it still feels right to me. So fuck it. Our mindset's still, What do *we* want to hear? What is it that nobody else is doing that we can do? That's what we did with *Psychocandy* and that's what we're still doing. It's weirdly the same, but completely different."

It only remains to ask, if you looked into a pair of Glasgow eyes, what would you see? "Depends on the Glaswegian," says Jim. "Mostly you'd see friendliness, but occasionally, you'd see them coming towards you – at 100 miles an hour with a Glasgow kiss."

Ian Harrison

Glasgow Eyes is released on March 8 via Fuzz Club. The band tour the UK and Europe from March 22.

"We're sitting on top of Guy Fawkes' barrels of dynamite, smoking cigars…"
JIM REID

Simon Ritter/Getty, Martyn Goodacre/Getty

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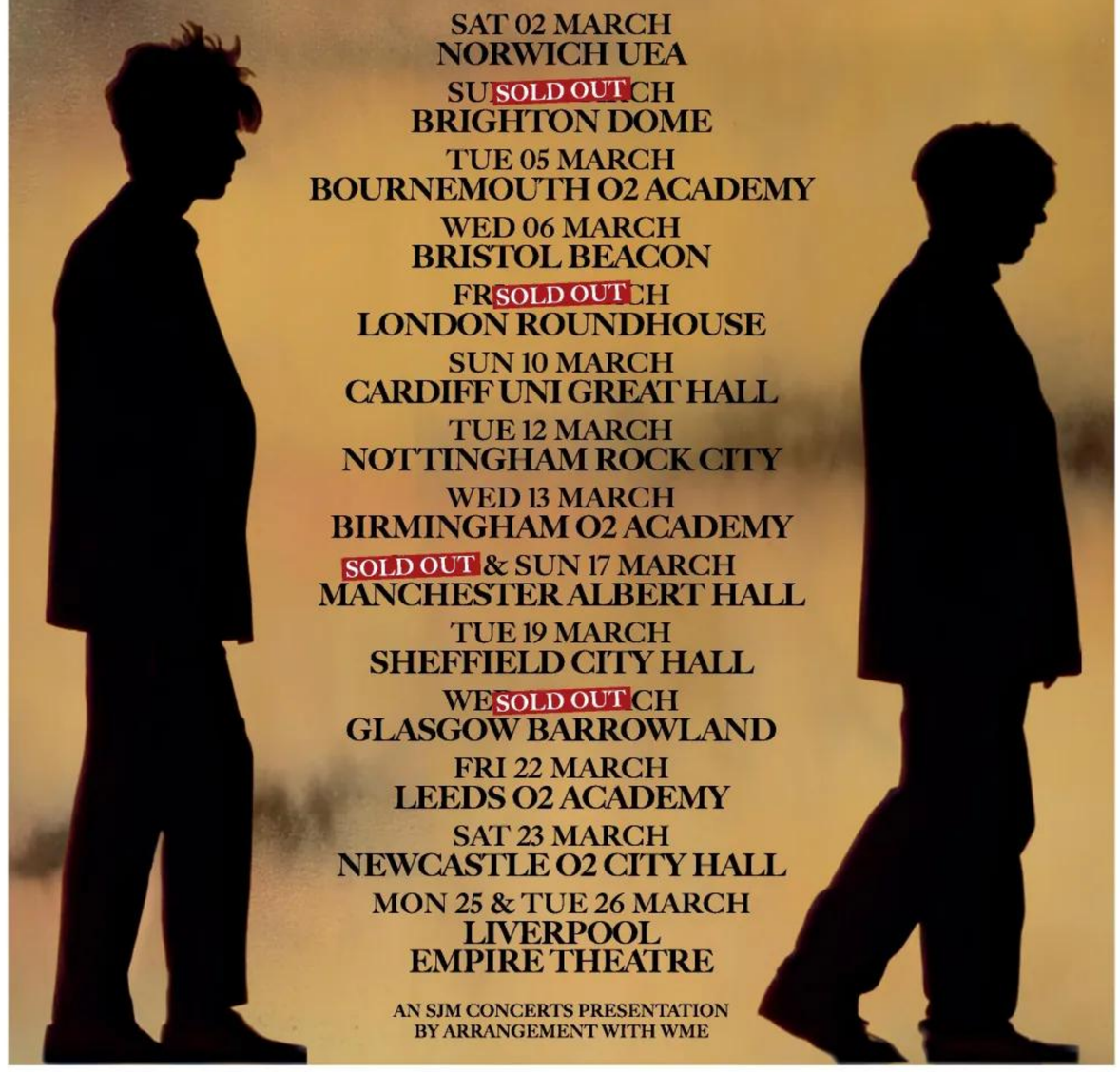

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Back in style: Dee C Lee is "ready to start making music as a grown-up."

"My voice went after not singing for so long and giving it loads without warming up."
DEE C LEE

FACT SHEET
Title: *Just Something*
Due: spring
Songs: Don't Forget About Love/How To Love/Back In Time/Mountains/For Once In My Life
The Buzz: "It's really based around musicianship, and [producer] Tristan did his magic, he really got the vibe of what I was trying to get. I think that there's a thread through this album, you can really hear my whole career and the people I've worked with."
Dee C Lee

BACK AFTER 26 YEARS! DEE C LEE HAS THINGS TO SAY

JUST SOMETHING is Dee C Lee's first album since 1998's Japan-only *Smiles*. She recorded it at Chicken Shack studios in Bromley, the home set-up of producer Sir Tristan Longworth. "It *is* a chicken shack," says the former Style Council vocalist and Wham! backing singer, speaking from the east London offices of her label Acid Jazz. "He's got chickens in the back. If I was going for a note and couldn't get it, I'd go and sit in the garden and chill out with the chickens for five minutes… after that, I'm getting it right."

Her return to recording is partly the consequence of the 2020 documentary Long Hot Summers: The Story Of The Style Council. Therein, in 2019, Lee, her former husband and bandmate Paul Weller, keyboardist Mick Talbot and drummer Steve White reunited to play 1988 cut It's A Very Deep Sea.

"I'd forgotten how beautiful that track was," says Lee, "and it was lovely to do it. It got the old juices going again. At the documentary screening I was feeling quite soppy and I met [Acid Jazz boss and the UK's Mod-in-chief] Eddie Piller, who said, 'I'd forgotten about your beautiful voice, are you doing music?' I don't think I would have done it with anybody else but Acid Jazz because they would never have got me as much.

"I've always made music, but I'd wanted to concentrate on having another life, which was romance, children, etc," she says of her time away from recording and the unavoidable vicissitudes of life. "I got it, and then I *didn't* get it. And then I got it again. I've had such a long time out, enjoying it too, watching my kids grow up, one with kids of her own. Now I've got that freedom again."

She got down to work quickly in early 2020 and used lockdowns as a time to write, drawing on existing compositions and collaborating with songwriters including '80s collaborators Michael McEvoy and Ernest McKone, Paul Barry (who co-wrote Cher's Believe) and old friend Talbot. After demoing from February to April, "nine to five" studio work at Chicken Shack began in early summer '23, with players from The Brand New Heavies and the James Taylor Quartet, among others. They finished in August, with a restorative week's break in Sardinia in-between ("my voice went after not singing for so long," says Lee, "and then giving it loads without warming up").

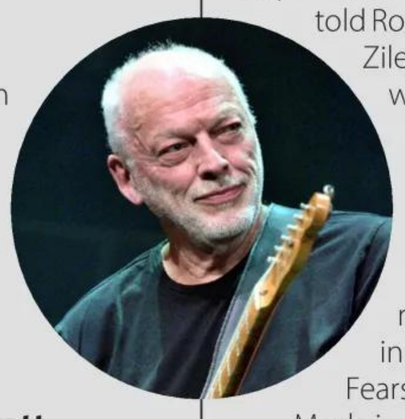
Tracks include uplifting love song Everyday Summer, penned by her daughter Leah, Motown-esque Mick Talbot co-write Walk Away, and Trojan Horse, which reflects on betrayal. "It has got this Acid Jazz-y sound," says Lee of the album's mix of '80s R&B, '70s funk and '60s soul, "but you can also taste a little Wham!, definitely some Style Council, the music that I grew up listening to, and whatever else has been milling around there."

She's planning more work and live performances and is gratified that, 40 years on from her first successes, her voice has deepened and gained in texture. "I knew my voice was going to sound more grown up, and I wanted that," she says. "I'm ready to start making music as a grown-up, you know?"

Ian Harrison

ALSO WORKING

…in December, **DAVID GILMOUR**'s (right) wife **Polly Samson** posted an image of the guitarist next to an EMI REDD.51 console, suggesting he was in Mark Knopfler's British Grove studios. This follows photos of Gilmour playing guitar in Salvation Music Studio in Hove with bassist **Guy Pratt**, **Roger Eno** and his singer/double bassist daughter Romany in 2022 and '23 pics. Plus, back in 2022, Samson told Romanian arts magazine Zile și Nopți, "I'm working with David Gilmour on new songs" …re-formed now for a decade, **RIDE** release their seventh LP *Interplay* in March. As well as grooves and melodies, the '80s inspiration of Tears For Fears, Talk Talk and Depeche Mode is promised …MOJO was pleased to receive a studio update from **TAV FALCO**: "we have new album sessions scheduled for February 12-21 at Phillips studio in Memphis. ORG Music is producing for release in September. The album will be produced and arranged by **Mario Monterosso**" …in December, **WATERBOYS** keyboardist **Paul Brown** announced an "incredible four days back in Dublin mixing the next Waterboys LP with **Mike Scott**" …**THE HIGH LLAMAS**' *Hey Panda* arrives in March: tracks include two songs with **Bonnie 'Prince' Billy**: How The Best Was Won and Hungriest Man …one of MOJO's US pals has heard word of possible new music from **TOM WAITS** (left) …it's unlikely he'll tour again, but **OZZY OSBOURNE** told DJ Brent Porche of 93.3 WMMR radio that he's intending to make a new album this year when Stones producer **Andrew Watt** is free…



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Decca celebrates the legacy of the iconic DERAM Records.

David Bowie

Laughing with Liza

Bowie's early Deram singles collected in a 7" box for the very first time, including a never before released version of Space Oddity, his breakthrough hit.

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Someones Band

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Prole Art Threat: Hurray For The Riff Raff's Alynda Segarra brings other people into their space.

RIFF RAFF'-N'ROLL

Five Segarra specials.

1 Youth Lagoon *Prizefighter* (FAT POSSUM, 2023)

2 Youth Lagoon *Rabbit* (FAT POSSUM, 2023)

3 MJ Lenderman *Rudolph* (ANTI-, 2023)

4 Tom Waits *Time* (ISLAND, 1985)

5 Charles Mingus *Jump Monk* (DEBUT, 1956)

Hurray For The Riff Raff

Alynda Segarra talks doo wop, hobo'ing and looking for home.

RAISED IN the Bronx, hardcore punk fan Alynda Segarra left the city at 17 to map their own America, jumping freight trains and playing with "hobo band" Dead Man Street Orchestra. In 2007, Segarra formed renegade folk collective Hurray For The Riff Raff in New Orleans; their nine albums include 2014's breakthrough *Small Town Heroes*, 2017's *The Navigator*, where Segarra spotlit their Puerto Rican heritage, and 2022's elegiac *Life On Earth*. Segarra admits previously worrying about commodifying their free-range past as industry-friendly "bohemia", but with new album *The Past Is Still Alive*, they present a vital version of their complicated youth: camping on toxic waste-ground, losing friends, hiding from cops. "This album is creating a space where these moments can still be alive," says Segarra, "a place I can bring other people into."

Tommy Kha

On *The Past Is Still Alive*, you sing about feeling you were born in the wrong generation. Which was the right one?

As a kid, I was obsessed with the '50s. It came from being raised by my aunt and uncle – that was really their era. We listened to a lot of doo wop. I was just so sure I should have been at a sock-hop. I remember going to elementary school, talking about how I loved Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin, and the other kids being like, "We love Backstreet Boys – what are you talking about?" Later, I learned about Bob Dylan and Joan Baez and was so convinced that was when I should have been around. But now, I think we're supposed to be here at this time to do what we can to create some kind of beauty and encourage some kind of empathy.

"We had this joke – we were too cute to get arrested."
ALYNDA SEGARRA

What did you learn from your "hobo band" days?

I learned a lot of traditional songs from all around the world – such a great building block for songwriting. I learned how to communicate with a team. We were all sleeping in the same places and sharing the same food – it's like, very intense quarters and very high-stress situations: "We've got to get on this train. And there's six of us and we all have instruments." I learned how to trust people – which I'm still working on – but I really trusted my bandmates and I learned how to be vulnerable. It's like a relationship – you can get so hurt. The band didn't last for ever, so I also learned how to continue on afterwards.

You've dedicated the new record to your late father. How did he influence you?

He was a hippy, he was a Latin jazz musician and he was a Vietnam veteran, and that had such a huge impact on me. He never shied away from telling me the truth about his experience as a marine – "they put black and brown kids to the front because we were disposable." Hearing that as a seven-year-old, it really started a questioning of authority.

After your wandering, are you settled in New Orleans?

I wish I could say New Orleans will be my forever home, but I don't think it is. I definitely still feel the call to search for a place. The thing about touring musicians is even when we put years into a place, we're so rarely home you feel like a visitor anyway. Like, "thanks for inviting me to this wonderful event you're planning, but I won't be there."

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

I went to jail with my hobo band. We had this ongoing joke – it shows the invincibility of being in your early twenties and late teens – that we were too cute to get arrested. "A railroad bull [security guard] will see us, but we're just a bunch of Muppets, basically. Like, nobody's gonna arrest all six of us." But we definitely were arrested. We were in there for about three days. It was going to be much longer, but there was a voicemail line where our friends could leave messages, so we put out the call and friends got us bailed out, a big push from our community of weirdos to free us. We had to do a lot of benefit shows to pay people back.

Victoria Segal

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

Rat Scabies

The Damned's returned drummer raves over The Poll Winners Of 1940's Sing, Sing, Sing (Pye Golden Guinea Records, 1959).

When I was incredibly small, eight or nine, the only decent pop music you'd hear on the radio was jazz. And nearly every jazz record had a drum solo – which even then I'd find really exciting.

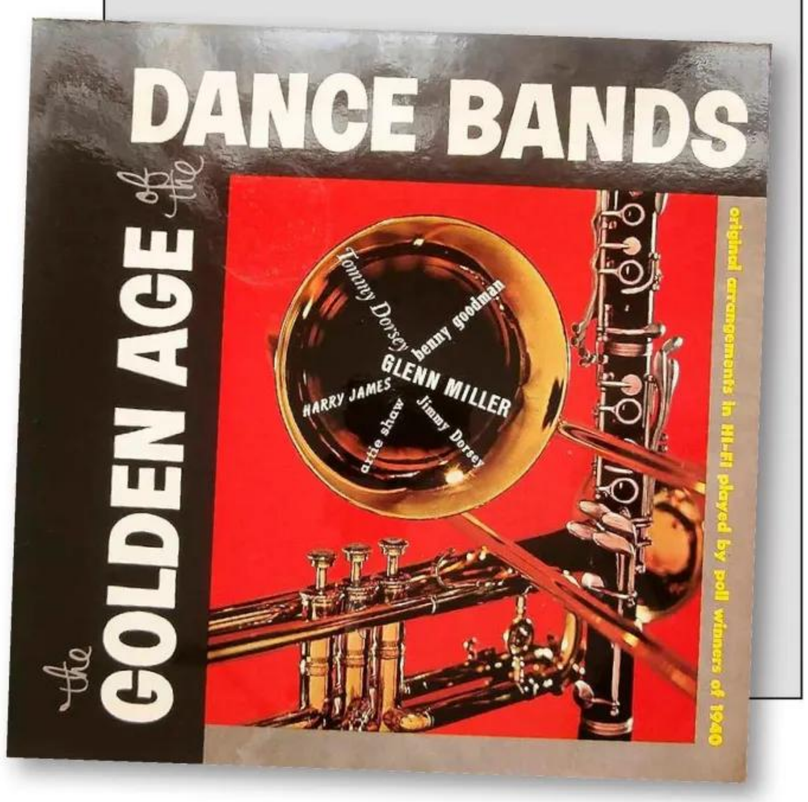
So at an early age I was given *The Golden Age Of The Dance Bands*. This was a collection of big band tunes played by the top musicians of the swing era. And on it was Sing, Sing, Sing – the Louis Prima tune, although the arrangement was the famous Benny Goodman one, with the amazing Gene Krupa drum part.

It was just everything I wanted. It was drums – huge tom-toms! – and this great vibe. It was kind of *alive*. Gene Krupa had a way of playing that just opened me up. You know the saying, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing"? Well, that's what made Gene Krupa such an amazing drummer, and on Sing, Sing, Sing he's allowed to *glow*. The track has the classic, punchy, big band brass, but it also takes you on a journey through all these different atmospheres. At one point it has kind of a 'creeping about in the dark' sound. At another, the horns drop right down, leaving the drums thundering away. A lot of tracks I'd heard had a drum solo but I'd not heard anything that *led* with the drums like that.

I covered the song on my [2018] solo album, *P.H.D.* It's just me on drums and Joe Atkinson [Flipron, Neville Staple Band] playing the horn melodies on piano. It really works in that stripped-down mode. Can you hear Sing, Sing, Sing in The Damned? Well, it must be in there somewhere, because it's engraved into me. It's the thing about the drums being the heartbeat of music. As soon as I heard it, I knew, That's what I want to be. I want to be the guy that makes that noise.

Danny Eccleston

The Damned tour the UK in December 2024. See www.officialdamned.com



DR JOHN COOPER CLARKE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS IN SHOWBIZ!

"IT SOUNDED more cheerful than, What, He's Still Around?" laughs venerable poet Dr John Cooper Clarke, savouring every vowel and consonant in inimitable timbres Mancunian. "It sounds like a celebration of something, and how often can you celebrate 50 years of showbiz?"

Clarke came to prominence as an eloquent voice in the Northern punk boom of '76, but as the name of his imminent UK tour – Celebrating 50 Years In Showbiz – suggests, this poet's odyssey began a few years earlier. His first paid gig was at north Manchester's Embassy Club, pie-and-ash lair of notorious comedian Bernard Manning, largely to prove to his sceptical father that it was possible to earn money from poetry.

"It wasn't very good," recalls Clarke. "It was the poet's worst enemy – public indifference. Bernard said, 'They don't like poetry here kid, half of 'em can't fucking read.' But I've always tended to get the rough stuff out of the way first, so the next step will seem like a doddle – I was very interested in punk rock and I figured that's where I belonged, in a world of controversy and outrage. Ha ha!"

So he forged on, putting his piquant yet warming poems to music between '78 and '82 on rated albums such as *Disguise In Love*, *Snap, Crackle & Bop* and *Zip Style Method*. Thereafter, certain pharmaceutical diversions, sometimes in the company of Nico from the Velvets, distracted him. In more recent years he's returned to regular performance and output, feted by his peers and honoured by his home burg Salford with an honorary doctorate and Freedom Of The City.

One lesson he's learned is that there's nothing wrong with showbiz. "They don't have a problem with it in the States – I think Bob Dylan probably realises he's in show business. Rock'n'rollers don't like to use the term 'show business', and if they do, they use it pointedly, especially in England. It's a kind of snobbery, like when they call me a 'performance poet'. I recite poetry, I don't tap dance or juggle with anything. Where's the performance?"

A new collection of poems, entitled WHAT, is also due, featuring new works including R U The Business, Smooth Operetta, Burnley, Anger Manager, Dream Home Ghetto, From The Slums Of Belgravia and Mr Hyde And Mr Hyde. And what can we expect from the tour, wonders MOJO?

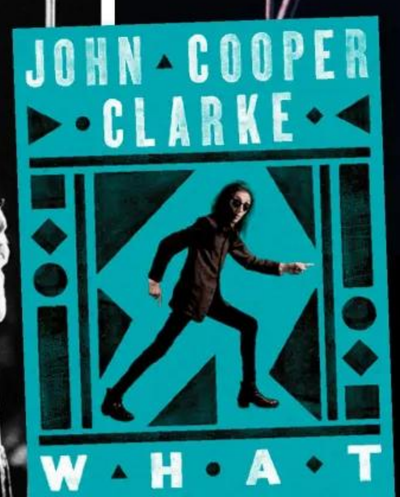
"More of the same and then some?" he suggests. "More words in a different order, to maximum effect? That's the plan anyway. This is what I do. How can it alter? People ask, 'How do you keep going?', but I don't know how you'd stop personally. I do think it's better now, though. I've got more vocal range – when I hear my old stuff, with the nasal whiny voice… I like to think I'm furnished with a thespian baritone these days."

As one who long inhabited the Bohemian fringes, what's it like being respectable in the autumn of his years? "I don't really think I am," he says. "Every time I go on telly it's, 'No bad language!' You know, I could live a very adventurous life if I wanted, but dull routine is paradise to me. I just see myself as part of a poetic tradition. I was determined to be a professional poet, just to say, when someone asks, 'What do you do for a living?' And say, I'm a poet."

Ian Harrison

Dr John Cooper Clarke's Celebrating 50 Years In Showbiz tour begins in March; he plays the London Palladium on March 12. WHAT is published by Picador on February 8.

"I like to think I'm furnished with a thespian baritone these days…"
DR JOHN COOPER CLARKE



Poet's corner: (left) John Cooper Clarke performing at the Lyceum, London, October 9, 1980; (above) John now, giving "more of the same and then some"; (left) his new book.

Michael Putland Archive, Jody Hartley, Camera Press/Paul Slattery

Scott of the *Atlantic*: Fagan in 1969; (below) Scott today, still "committed to bringing reality to an audience."

FUGITIVE SONGWRITER SCOTT FAGAN SCORNS OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE

"I WAS A FAIRLY radical young dude who was not interested in compromise," Scott Fagan tells MOJO, explaining how his determination to tell the unvarnished truth about his impoverished, bohemian upbringing in the US Virgin Islands helped to steer his mighty 1968 debut *South Atlantic Blues* towards the rocks. "I take a perverse pride in the fact that I never sold out. Of course, I've had to apologise to my children and their mothers for that."

The sun-soaked Jimmy Webb that nobody got to hear, Fagan was born in New York to be-bop besotted parents, but was taken to the island of Saint Thomas by his eccentric mother as a child, where he received a schooling in calypso and Puerto Rican music as well as hard knocks. "We were the poorest people I had ever seen," he remembers.

Possessed of a need to sing, Fagan returned to New York in 1964, where he became a protégé of songwriting giant Doc Pomus. Pretty and intense, he looked set for a major breakthrough when he was picked up by Bert Berns' Bang! label, but 1966's Give Love A Chance did not find its mark.

Further misadventures followed when the A&R man who made Fagan his marquee signing at Atlantic's Atco label never took up his post, leaving the Richard Harris-worthy epic dramas of *South Atlantic Blues* to plummet unloved into the cut-out bins (though American artist Jasper Johns loved it enough to make a series of lithographs, entitled Jasper Johns Record, in its honour).

It is a distressing, dark album at times, but that – for Fagan – was the point. "A whole lot of stuff around in those days was okie-dokie or make-believe," he says. "Me and my writing partner Joe Kookoolis had family who were depending on us to bring home the bacon but we were intensely committed to bringing reality to an audience."

Similarly noble intentions led to Fagan and Kookoolis's rock musical Soon crash-landing on Broadway in the early 1970s ("we were fired and barred from the theatre before the thing opened by the producers," says Fagan), but they kept battling on, repurposing some Soon songs for Fagan's lesser-spotted second album, *Many Sunny Places*, released in 1975.

Latterly, interest in Fagan's work spiked when it was discovered that he was the natural father of Magnetic Fields auteur Stephin Merritt (he had a fling with Merritt's mother in Saint Thomas in the 1960s), while the slow-burning rep of *South Atlantic Blues* has encouraged him to keep recording, mindful that – only 50-odd years too late – he finally has an audience. "My biggest frustration has been writing things that no one hears," says Fagan, who also makes music for children and is redoubling his efforts to commit all the songs from Soon to tape. "I'm busy and looking forward."

Jim Wirth

South Atlantic Blues is reissued by Earth Records on February 9.

Richie Matthews, Dolly Faibyshev/New York Times/Eyevine

> **"I take a perverse pride in the fact that I never sold out."**
> **SCOTT FAGAN**

SCOTT THREE

Three Fagan revels.

South Atlantic Blues
(ATCO, 1968)

David Ackles' *American Gothic* with a faint tingle of Latin pop and calypso, Fagan's debut bristles with frustration and killer songs: the title track, In My Head, Madam-Moiselle and more.

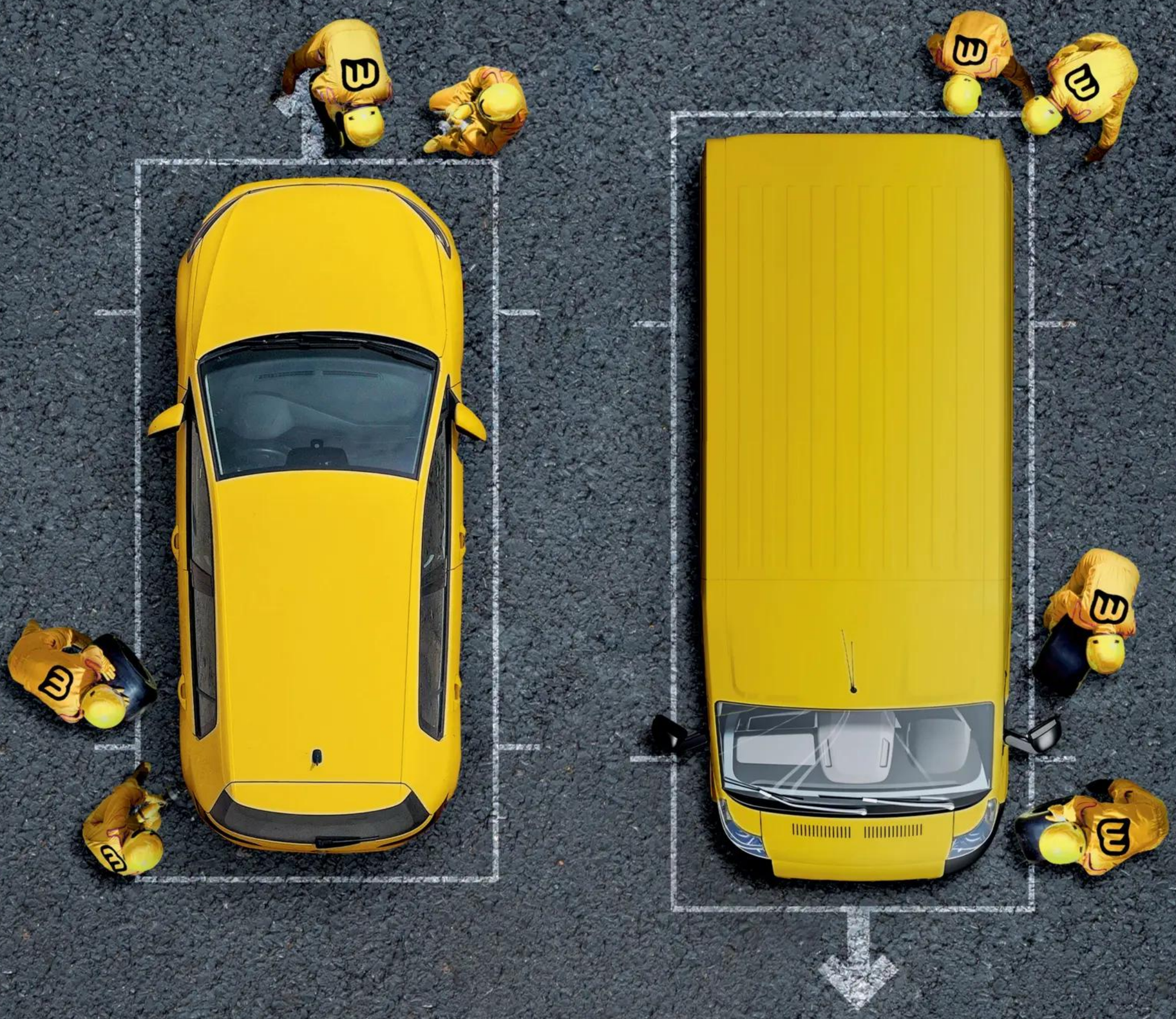
Many Sunny Places
(RCA, 1975)

Featuring scraps from Fagan's ill-starred musical Soon, *South Atlantic Blues*' younger half-brother turns the focus to positive island vibes. "I really worked hard to lighten up," he says.

The Love Songs Of Scott Fagan
(LIL' FISH, 2021)

Scotland's Trembling Bells are among the guests on this self-released collection of Fagan's later work; "quite a good album full of good songs," says the singer, underselling neatly.

Car or van, work or play



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Magnificent Seventies

Collected – the LA rock photography of Ginny Winn.

"I DIDN'T WANT to be intrusive," says ex-photographer Ginny Winn. "There are so many photos I *didn't* take when I was backstage with bands like Fleetwood Mac or The Rolling Stones – other people were trying to grab shots, and I sort of bent over too far the other way, not wanting to be paparazzi. I was sitting right in front of Mick Jagger and didn't take a picture, which was insane."

Yet the approach had its compensations, as demonstrated by her new collection Grievous Angels, Trout Masks, And American Beauties, which collects 1970s images she took as staff photographer for Warner/Reprise and after. Within are unguarded portraits of Bob Marley, Joni Mitchell, Gram Parsons, Captain Beefheart, the Grateful Dead, Alice Cooper and many more. "They're close up and personal," she says. "Like you're really with the person."

Having received a Brownie camera as a kid, in the late '60s she was on Fire Island in New York state, running liquid light shows for bands. "Projecting these blobs of colour – it was very boring," she recalls. "So I started projecting pictures I'd taken, and did dissolves – very primitive, but more fun."

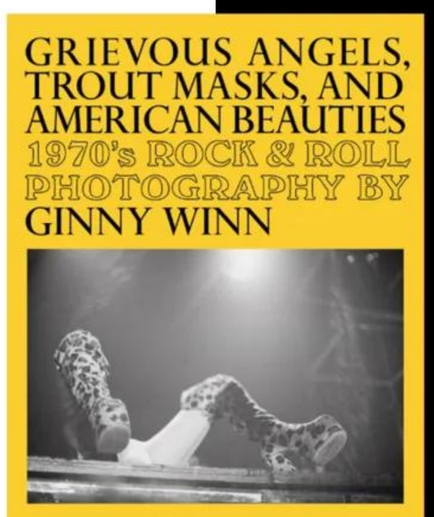
Then in 1972, in Los Angeles, "somebody called me, and said there was this perfect job for me at Warner Brothers. It was doing what I was doing, but with the artists and new releases." After meeting art director Ed Thrasher, she began shooting the label's roster and curating their promotional materials. "I'd go out and shoot my visual idea, and take pictures to fit with the hit song or one of the other songs on the album," she says. "I was doing a visual trip to the music."

Still, she trod lightly, the better to get close to her subjects. Images include Beefheart in a '50s coffee shop in a small airport outside Eureka. "He was very paranoid," says the photographer. "I think he was afraid he was going to get busted somehow." There's also the Dead at their ranch, when "there was a bottle of liquid Owsley acid… each of us had a drop. I had an hour… I just had a kind of heightened awareness all day." Another image finds The Band's Rick Danko in conversation with Bob Marley at a birthday party for the latter's wife Rita at The Daisy in Beverly Hills. "There were two other photographers there and they were giving me a really hard time because I was prepared to shoot with no light, using the flame on the candle," says Ginny. "Bob Marley came, he wouldn't let them shoot. He said, '*Only* Ginny.' It was the '70s in Los Angeles, so Danko and Marley could have been talking about anything!"

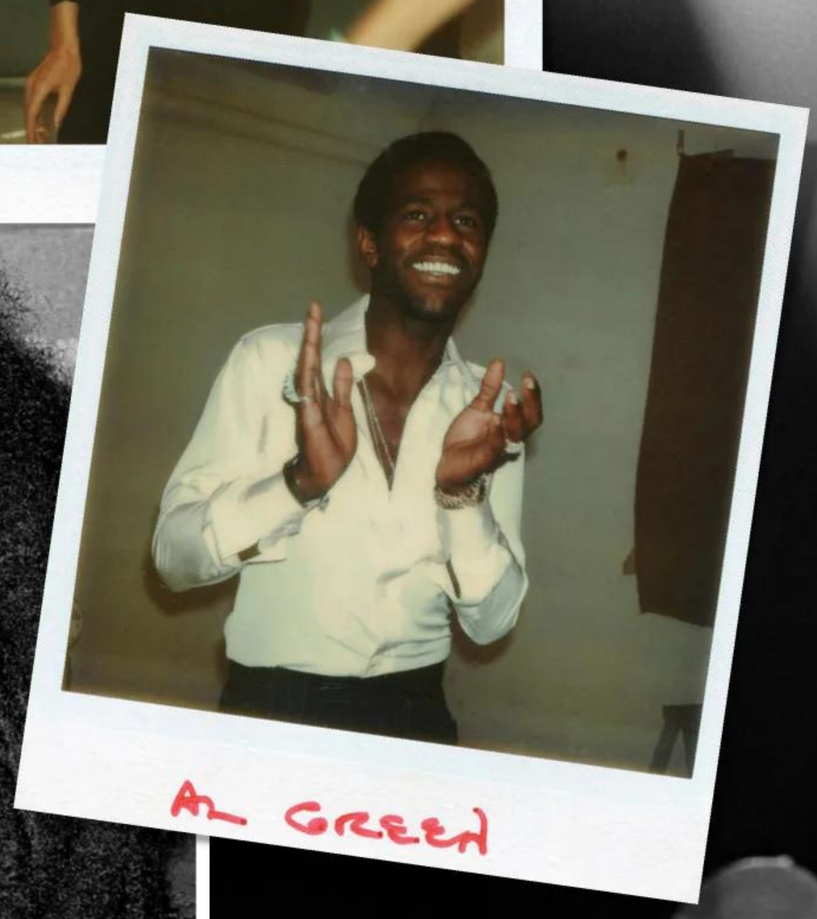
As well as being drawn from the Warner/Reprise vaults, other images – Polaroids, namely – date from 1975 to 1979, when she worked with photographer Norman Seeff. "I always was a hard worker," says Winn, who stepped away from photography in 1983 and is now a psychotherapist. "I remember some guy said, 'Oh, *you* took those pictures?' And he was flabbergasted. But I was just always doing my thing."

Ian Harrison

Grievous Angels, Trout Masks, And American Beauties 1970's Rock & Roll Photography By Ginny Winn is published on March 1, 2024 via Fantagraphics Books.



Ginny Winn (11)



Eyes on the Warner/Reprise: (clockwise from far left) Donna Summer on Polaroid in 1975; Gram Parsons shoots some hoops, 1973; Rick Danko talks to Bob Marley at Rita Marley's birthday party, Beverly Hills, July 26, 1978; James Taylor in 1975; Joni Mitchell in 1977; Al Green in 1975; Alice Cooper on-stage in 1973; Beefheart caffeinates, 1973; Van Morrison live in '74; Bob wishes Rita many happy returns; John Cale in 1971.

“We’re not witches, but we’re all a little bit spooky.”
RADIE PEAT, ØXN

You want it darker: ØXN (from left) John Murphy, Katie Kim, Radie Peat and Eleanor Myler get weird’n’wild.

MEET ØXN, LATEST GRADUATES FROM LANKUM’S AVANT-FOLK ACADEMY. “DARK CRAIC” GUARANTEED!

BY SOME distance the most outré record ever to be released on ultra-orthodox Irish traditional music label Claddagh Records, the debut album from Dublin collective ØXN brings together Lankum’s Radie Peat, the band’s producer John ‘Spud’ Murphy, his collaborator in Dublin Krautrockers Percolator, Eleanor Myler, plus singer-songwriter Katie Kim. The title *CYRM* (pronounced ‘sigh-rum’) is an archaic word for an incantation, though Peat is keen to emphasise to MOJO that – despite the supernatural racket they make – none of the band are committed to the old ways. “We’re not witches,” she jokes. “But we’re all a little bit spooky.”

Every bit as extreme as her other band’s much-fêted *False Lankum*, *CYRM* features the collective’s torrid takes on traditional slashers like The Cruel Mother, The Trees They Do Grow High and Love Henry, as well as grave-dark interpretations of more modern material: Maija Sofia’s The Wife Of Michael Cleary, Kim’s own The Feast and Scott Walker’s gaunt homage to doomed Italian film director Pier Paolo Pasolini, Farmer In The City. There’s some folk music in there, but also thunderous drumming and a fair amount of industrial sludge. ØXN’s mood board for the record is – perhaps unsurprisingly – an eccentric one.

“Eggs!” says Kim.

“Enya’s there,” says Peat. “Pagan symbolism is there, like Newgrange [the prehistoric monument in County Meath]. A bit of Celtic mysticism, probably a bit of Clannad, all David Lynch’s films and Twin Peaks.”

ØXN began when Kim and Peat were set up on a musical blind date at a time when Peat says she was “completely obsessed” with Kim’s music. They played a couple of shows together before other projects intervened, reconvening during the Covid years when Kim returned home following a spell in New York and found she was living close to her old collaborator. Myler was drafted in to help on drums, and Murphy was soon enlisted too. “He was Katie’s housemate,” says Peat. “So he was in the next room.”

CYRM was then pieced together in the relative seclusion of Dublin’s Hellfire Studios, the lack of distractions proving to be inspiring. “We were so isolated up there in the evenings,” says Peat. “There’s no pub to head out to as soon as you’re done, so hanging on that extra hour and getting weird definitely lent itself to what we were doing.”

“It’s really fun to just experiment with it and go a little bit nuts,” adds Kim. “On a couple of the songs we decided just to go wild.”

Cited by Peat as something of a “Spud special”, Farmer In The City certainly fits that bill, Walker’s moody verses giving way to full-on cacophony. “There’s a bit of a kitchen sink going on with lots of synths and percussion,” says Murphy, whose discordant symphony has an exciting, Swell Maps-esque collection of found sounds including “the girls playing washing-up gloves as percussion, me messing with a packet of crisps, and a sample of a builder.

“A Lot of craic,” he adds, encapsulating the ØXN milieu. “Dark craic.”

Jim Wirth

ØXN’s CYRM is out now on Claddagh Records.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Lankum; Black Country, New Road; Comus; Scott Walker
- Kim reckons the oppression of women is an important theme of *CYRM*. Hence, Love Henry appealed to ØXN as one of the few folk songs “about the woman murdering the man for once, rather than men constantly murdering women in all of these traditional songs.”
- Written by Galway-based Maija Sofia, The Wife Of Michael Cleary is about an unhappy story from Irish history: Bridget Cleary was killed in 1895 in County Tipperary because her husband believed she had been abducted by fairies and replaced with a changeling.
- ØXN don’t believe in witchcraft but are not 100 per cent sure about ghosts. Peat smirked when she found a room she was playing in at Dublin’s Kilmainham Gaol had been treated with cleansing crystals, but found herself seriously unsettled when she walked in. “I instantly just started bawling; there was something really weird going on.”

KEY TRACKS

- The Cruel Mother
- The Wife Of Michael Cleary
- Farmer In The City

GET READY: NEW SOUL SENSATION JALEN NGONDA DELIVERS FROM TEMPTATIONS!

JALEN NGONDA, eyes bright, is telling MOJO about the time he met Martha Reeves backstage at Liverpool's Arts Club after he supported her at a 2015 show. "She's a hero and I wanted to tell her," he says. "She was like, 'Was that you up there?' When I nodded she said, 'Oh man, you really sang.'"

Affirmation from the Motown legend couldn't have come at a better time for Ngonda, a soul singer from Maryland. He'd just finished a songwriting course at Liverpool's Institute Of Performing Arts and, having run out of money, couldn't afford his plane ticket home. "Having Martha say she liked what I did really helped."

> **"Having Martha Reeves say she liked what I did really helped."**
> **JALEN NGONDA**

It's no surprise Reeves dug him. Back then, Ngonda already tapped into the emotional ache of Marvin Gaye and David Ruffin, but in the intervening years he's found his own voice, captured on last September's debut album, *Come Around And Love Me*. There, he croons and wails over opulently arranged backdrops studded with touches of fuzz guitar; the complete package.

Ngonda, now back in the UK and based in Peckham, south London, grew up in Wheaton-Glenmont in Maryland. A musical all-rounder, he played drums at church and violin and piano at school, "just for something to do". On finding The Temptations in his father's record collection, however, he entered what he calls his "nerd's phase". "I wanted to sing, not just as a hobby, but as a job," he says. "They ignited it all." Ngonda got a guitar and started writing and performing his own songs in local talent shows, before applying in 2014 for the Liverpool Institute Of Performing Arts. "The course I wanted to do just happened to be in Liverpool so I had to go there to do it," he says of the move, but once in the city he made the most of it. "I went to *learn* how to do it and instead I *did* it. I performed every night at every bar and club I could. It was amazing."

By then his music tastes had broadened. "One day it's Motown, the next Coltrane and Miles, the next The Beach Boys, The Mamas And The Papas and The Doors," he says now. "It all shapes what I do."

Profile-rising sets at 2017's Newport Folk Festival and Montreal Jazz Festival paved the way for 2018's Talking About Mary EP, its standout the roadhouse rough Holler (When You Call My Name). Covid set plans for his debut album back, but signing to Daptone in 2021 renewed his confidence. "I was ready to go," he says.

With songs sketched out on acoustic guitar at home then built up in Brooklyn's Hive Mind studio with producers Mike Buckley and Vincent Chiarito, Ngonda flourished in their live-to-tape setting: "It was so natural, I forgot where I was. Nothing else mattered."

Since the release of *Come Around And Love Me*, life has got busy, and a UK tour is scheduled for April. "I'm just back from New York and am off to Hong Kong next week. But other than more time spent in airports, nothing else has changed. I'm still buying records and hanging out with mates."

Lois Wilson

Jalen Ngonda's Come Around And Love Me is out now on Daptone.

When love comes to town: south London-based Jalen Ngonda channels Motown, Coltrane and The Doors.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Marvin Gaye, David Ruffin, Gamble & Huff
- "We connected immediately," Ngonda says of first meeting Daptone co-founders Neal Sugarman and Gabe Roth. They initially offered him a one-off single deal that resulted in 2022's What A Difference She Made/Just Like You Used To, both sides written by Ngonda with pal Sam Knowles, AKA Karma Kid.
- *Come Around And Love Me* is produced and arranged by Mike Buckley and Vincent Chiarito, both members of the late Charles Bradley's Extraordinaires.
- Ngonda currently lives in Peckham. His favourite record shop is Pure Vinyl in Brixton.

KEY TRACKS

- If You Don't Want My Love
- That's All I Wanted From You
- Lost

MOJO PLAYLIST

The month's best Manc-rock, wonky jams and power pop.

1 LIAM GALLAGHER AND JOHN SQUIRE JUST ANOTHER RAINBOW
Liam dons his vintage Ray-Bans (with brown lenses) for a Rain/I Am The Resurrection roller that brings the Oasis/Roses mind-meld into glorious actuality.
Find it: *streaming services*

2 STEVEN WILSON INCLINATION (EWAN PEARSON REMIX)
Just out on 12-inch, glittering disco for Moonbase Alpha, with a hint of prog and Fourth World trumpet.
Find it: *streaming services*

3 ITASCA MILK
A "misty castle dream" begins Kayla Cohen's new LP with a vision of Genevieve, painted in her soft, burnt umber voice and shivery guitar.
Find it: *streaming services*

4 HOUSE BAND SPINNERS
A wonky LA jamming collective celebrate the dance style of the Grateful Dead's wildest fans, like a dubbed-out Can.
Find it: *streaming services*

5 SAM EVIAN WILD DAYS
Saucer-eyed, big-trousered power pop that's a bit solo Lennon/solo George and wholly irresistible.
Find it: *streaming services*

6 DAVID NANCE & MOWED SOUND MOCK THE HOURS
The Nebraskan outlier returns with a new band and a fresh take on classic rock, starting with this sinewy rethink of *Exile*-era Stones.
Find it: *YouTube*

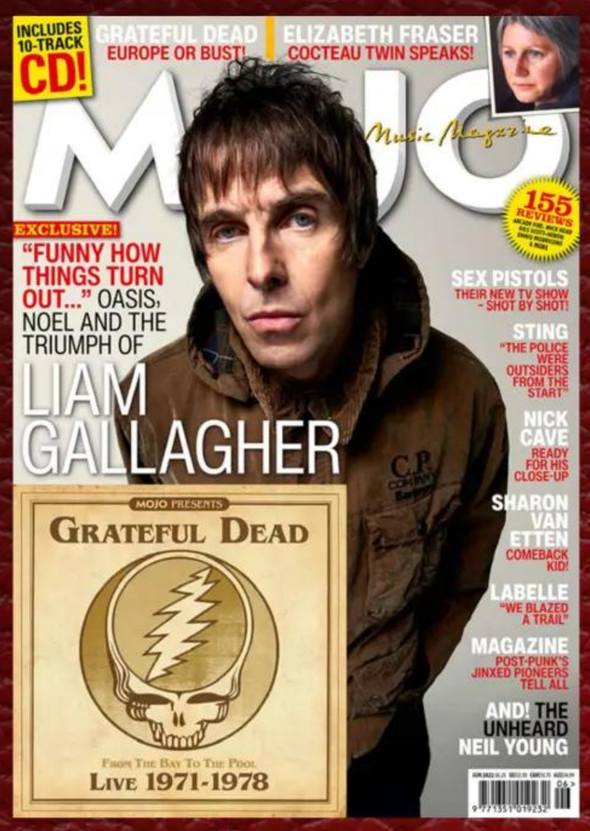
7 BOROUGH COUNCIL CASINO
Dan Carey-produced single from ungoogleable Hastings trio. Slow churning, with drawled codewords about desire and chance – release the post-rock dub spiders!
Find it: *Speedy Wunderground 7-inch*

8 THE LEMON TWIGS MY GOLDEN YEARS
Sun-flecked powerpop poignancy of a Big Star/Beach Boys type to dispel the wintry gloom. Dig the Fabs-like vid too.
Find it: *YouTube*

9 FAT DOG ALL THE SAME
South London head-the-balls bring cheek-chewing rave with rock moves, topped with grand accusations against the forces of negation.
Find it: *streaming services.*

10 ALABASTER DE PLUME GIFTS OF OLIVE
A short, meditative piece referencing the poem If I Must Die by Palestinian writer Refaat Alareer, who was killed in an airstrike in Gaza in December.
Find it: *Soundcloud*

Rosie Cohe, Tom Oxley



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THE MOJO INTERVIEW

Accrington Stanley FC's loss was prog rock's gain when Jon Anderson found his inner Art Garfunkel and said 'yes' to Yes. Through spats and schisms he's soldiered on, unbeaten, unbowed. How so? "I'm from the North, mate. Don't mess with me."

Interview by **MARK BLAKE** • Portrait by **ROGER KISBY**

IF YOU HEARD A DISTINCTIVELY LANCASTRIAN voice shatter the hill-sheltered California idyll of San Luis Obispo one evening in November 2023, the chances are it was Jon Anderson watching the football. The former Yes vocalist has lived in this old Spanish mission town since the mid-'90s, and still follows his childhood team, Accrington Stanley FC, albeit from afar.

"I found a TV channel that was showing their game against Wrexham," says Anderson, in his soft North-western burr. "And we beat 'em two-nil," he adds triumphantly.

Anderson speaks in the same breathy high-tenor heard on all those vintage Yes LPs. He's approaching his eightieth year, wants to "keep the energy moving" and claims to have "10 projects on the go."

His parents, county champion ballroom dancers Albert and Kathleen, christened their third son John Roy, after a music hall turn called 'John Roy The Melody Boy'. Anderson later dropped the 'h' because, "In my dreams, my name was always Jonathan."

In the early '60s, he played Hamburg with his first group, The Warriors, before moving to London and sweeping floors at a Soho club, La Chasse, where he made connections and hustled his way into what soon became Yes. Their landmark third release, 1971's *The Yes Album*, has just been reissued, and spotlights Anderson's choirboy voice and famously fanciful lyrics: "Shining, flying, purple wolfhound, show me where you are," anyone?

Anderson was arguably *the* voice of '70s progressive rock. Alongside band mainstays, bassist Chris Squire, guitarist Steve Howe and keyboard player Rick Wakeman, his energy helped propel Yes through the gold and platinum-selling *Fragile*, *Close To The Edge* and *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, and into American arenas. The singer's space-cadet persona made him a sitting target during the punk wars. But Yes's eco-friendly 1978 hit Don't Kill The Whale and Anderson's 1976 solo debut, *Olias Of Sunhillow* (about a beleaguered race fleeing a dying planet), now seem prescient.

Anderson left Yes in 1980 and made electro-pop hits with the Greek composer Vangelis, before returning for 1983's *90125* and its US Number 1 single, Owner Of A Lonely Heart. Since then, he's made solo records, collaborated with numerous musicians (including ex-Zappa violinist Jean-Luc Ponty) and fallen in and out of Yes.

In 2008, he suffered respiratory failure, but Yes continued in his absence, presently with the American vocalist and soundalike Jon Davison. "I don't blame them," he insists. "They have to make it sound like the real thing."

However, his old group are rarely far from his thoughts. Shortly before his death in June 2015, Chris Squire visited Anderson in a dream. He wasn't surprised. "You never know when you're interconnected with the cosmology of life," Anderson shrugs. "But I know people will say, 'OK Jon, no more magic mushrooms for you.'"

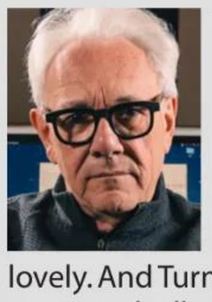
Of those 10 current projects, which is the one you're working on most?

Zamran, the follow-up to *Olias Of Sunhillow*. ➢

Roger Kisby, Spitfire Audio

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

90125 producer **Trevor Horn** on a master singer.



"When I first heard Jon it was a revelation – that you could sing that way in a rock band. But his voice is also deceptive. It's high but it has a lot of breadth. And the writing. Your Move – lovely. And Turn Of The Century: it sets the scene and tells a story, and has a beautiful ending. I think he's terrific."

But I started it in 2000. A couple of record companies are interested, but how interested are they really in a piece of music that's over four hours long? (*laughs*) I listen to it every morning, though, when I walk up and down the hills around here.

You recently performed classic Yes on tour with a group who sound more like Yes than Yes.

They're called The Band Geeks. A friend of mine sent me a video of them playing Heart Of The Sunrise [from 1971's *Fragile*]. It freaked me out because it sounded so much like 1952 or 1972 or whenever it was. I got in touch with the bass player Richie [Castellano] and said, "Why don't we go on the road together?" We did the Yes classics and audiences loved them all. So I said, Why don't we make an album together? So we are in the middle of creating that.

What was the first music that made an impression on you?

BBC radio – anything coming out of that magic machine, when I was around six years old. It would have been the music of the late '40s and early '50s, like Doris Day and Bing Crosby. But then you'd suddenly hear a symphony by Dvořák. Then, later, The Everly Brothers, Elvis Presley and one of my favourite people, Lonnie Donegan.

You played the washboard in a schoolboy skiffle group, before joining your brother Tony's band, The Warriors. But at the time you were working on a farm, delivering bricks, doing a milk round…

My brother told me The Warriors' singer was leaving and did I want to join them? My mum and dad were very supportive, but my mum used to say, "You're going to have to get a real job soon, though." Tony and I used to do the Everlys, then Tony would do Elvis and I'd do Roy Orbison. Suddenly music took over.

Weren't you also serious about playing for Accrington Stanley?

Yes, they were my life. Just up from our house was Peel Park football ground, and every night a few of the local kids would kick a ball around the car park. I played a lot against David Lloyd, who later became a famous cricketer. One time we started playing with some of the professionals, but I realised I could *either* be a football player or sing in a group.

What made you decide?

Les Cocker, who'd played for Accrington Stanley and became the trainer for England, said to me one day, "Jon, you're too small, you're gonna get kicked here, there and everywhere."

You're famous for your lyrics with Yes. Where did all those words come from? Were you a big reader as a child?

No, I was terrible at school, apart from painting and geography. But reading wasn't a consuming pastime until the '70s when I discovered Hermann Hesse, and read The Finding Of The Third Eye by Vera Stanley Alder, which opened up my state of consciousness.

You left The Warriors in 1967, and released two solo singles, Never My Love and (The Autobiography Of) Mississippi Hobo, as 'Hans Christian' a year later. Were you committed to being a solo artist?

Not really. It wasn't happening with The Warriors, but Never My Love only happened because the guy living in the next apartment to me heard me singing. He was [Paul Korda] the son of the film-maker Alexander Korda and just said, "Do you want to make a record?" So I went to Decca to record it, and the next thing I'm 'Hans Christian'. I thought, I don't care as long as I can feed myself and survive. About a month or two after that I met Chris Squire in La Chasse. But before then I was in The Gun [with brothers Paul and Adrian Gurvitz] for about 10 minutes.

What happened with The Gun?

I got them a gig at the Marquee, and halfway through they asked how much we were getting and I realised I'd never asked [Marquee manager] John Gee for any money. So much for being the hustler. By then, though, I was itching to work in any band. Chris Squire and I liked the same music – things like Simon And Garfunkel. It was meant to happen.

Yes's original guitarist Peter Banks later described you as "not backward about coming forward" and their first keyboard player, Tony Kaye, called you "Napoleon". Would you agree that you were pushy?

Oh yes, I'm from the North, mate. Don't mess with me. I was so driven. Chris was kind of posh, a Londoner, and [original Yes drummer] Bill Bruford was straight out of some university, a very intelligent man. Then there was me, speeding away like a lunatic – "Come on everybody, let's try this!" We opened for The Who and I got Pete Banks to smash a plastic guitar at the end, like Pete Townshend did. But it wouldn't break and we all fell about laughing.

Banks was asked to leave after the first two LPs, *Yes* (1969) and *Time And A Word* (1970). Did you worry Yes would lose momentum?

No, because we were aggressively trying to evolve. We were trying to get on with it and Pete was lagging behind. At the time I didn't feel like we had a complete energy.

Ex-Tomorrow guitarist Steve Howe replaced Banks for *The Yes Album*. Was that the beginning of the classic Yes era?

Yes, because I wasn't comfortable with my voice on the two albums before. Before *The Yes Album* I suggested to Chris we get away from London, so we rented a farmhouse in Devon for three weeks. It was a great time. Steve and I started writing together and then I asked Eddy Offord, who'd engineered *Time And A Word*, if he wanted to help produce. He said (*puts on a stoned-sounding voice*), "Yeah, OK, Jon… here's another joint." It was a glorious moment looking back,

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Yes he can: Anderson through the years.

1 Pride of Accrington: Jon Anderson aged five.

2 Wild at heart: Anderson (standing, second left) with The Warriors, 1964.

3 In the affirmative: the original line-up of Yes in 1968 (clockwise from left) Peter Banks, Tony Kaye, Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Bill Bruford.

4 Getting closer: Yes play the Crystal Palace Garden Party, London, September 2, 1972 (from left) Steve Howe, Anderson, Squire, Alan White, Rick Wakeman.

5 One from the heart: Anderson on-stage with the new model Yes, 1984.

6 Find the way home: Vangelis and Jon Anderson at Polydor Records, London, December 7, 1981.

7 Don't say yes: (from left) Anderson, Howe, Bruford and Wakeman, otherwise known as Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe, 1989.

8 Still hearing those wonderous stories: Jon and Rick on-stage with Yes Featuring Anderson, Rabin & Wakeman at Cirque Royal, Brussels, March 27, 2017.

9 "Music is a driving force to me – I have to keep moving": Anderson enjoys his state of independence, 1974.

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Courtesy Jon Anderson (2), Getty (6), Shutterstock

because *The Yes Album* felt like the next step.

***The Yes Album* became a UK Top 5 hit, and the 9:41 minutes of Yours Is No Disgrace cemented the band's reputation for lengthy songs. Where did that come from?**

It was all about evolving. But I also started listening to Sibelius' 7th Symphony, and it didn't stop. Normally, classical symphonies are broken into three sections, but this was a continuous 25-minute piece of music. I suggested to Steve we try something like that.

Longer songs weren't always ideal for a support group, though…

It was exciting in the studio, but when we opened for The Kinks in America [in winter 1971], Ray Davies told us not to go over our time slot – "Don't forget, Anderson." It was our first time in New York and we were going down well. We had four minutes left and I suggested we play Yours Is No Disgrace. Halfway through, the power goes and Ray is at the side of the stage, holding the plug – "I told you, Anderson, you fucking idiot!"

Yes went 'full Sibelius' on the side-long title track for 1972's *Close To The Edge*. By then Rick Wakeman had replaced Tony Kaye. Was this another energy issue?

Yeah, the energy wasn't moving. We'd been touring America, and I spoke to Chris and Steve on the plane home. Tony was a great keyboard player but I'm not sure he was into the idea of Moogs. I'd mentioned many times before that we needed to get extra sounds – I need a full orchestra, and could I have a choir, please? You'd listen to King Crimson and think, My God, there's so much going on. So we needed Rick.

Were King Crimson the competition?

No, the best band in London were Family. All Yes wanted to do when we started was be as famous as Family. That whole time was all about getting noticed. Then you get the front cover of Melody Maker and you think you've made it, but you realise you've still got a long way to go.

Bill Bruford left to join King Crimson in 1972 and was replaced by ex-Plastic Ono Band drummer Alan White. Yes's audience have always retained a great affection for that '71-'72 line-up though…

I understand why – *The Yes Album*, *Fragile* and *Close To The Edge*. But then there was [1973's double concept LP] *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, which was a very challenging idea – like we were asking too much of the audience.

> "There was me, **speeding away like a lunatic** – Come on everybody, **let's try this!**"

The stories of Yes making that album are legion. Is it true you originally suggested recording it in a tent in a bluebell wood using a generator buried underground?

Yes, and the band refused (*laughs*). So I put up plants and cut-outs of sheep, cows and ducks in the studio instead. The general consensus was, "This is just Jon doing what Jon does."

What were the problems with *Tales From Topographic Oceans*?

It never felt very comfortable as a whole piece of music, especially on tour. The reason for this, again, was an imbalance within the band. Some people were into it and some weren't.

Rick Wakeman has always been critical of the album…

Well (*briskly*), he was busy making *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII*. That's a lovely album. But… it's a delicate matter. When a guy's not around in the studio then he doesn't know the piece, and when you go off on tour you have to hope he knows it…

Yes didn't back down after that, though. Parts of *Relayer* [1974] were more challenging than anything your prog contemporaries were doing. Did you ever go too far?

Oh gosh yeah, of course. But I discovered two albums in the mid-'70s that opened my consciousness – Vangelis's *Création Du Monde* and *Wings Of The Delirious Demon…* by [Turkish electronic musician] Ilhan Mimaroğlu. On The Gates Of Delirium from *Relayer* we were trying to create the sound of a war, so I was jumping up and down on Alan White's old cymbals, hitting bits of scrap metal. It was meant to be challenging.

Did Vangelis nearly replace Rick Wakeman at this time?

I knew at the end of the ['73] tour that Rick was going to leave and become a megastar. I'd already met Vangelis, and was so impressed. It was like watching a magician. So I went to Paris and dragged him to London to join the band. But the rest of Yes didn't understand him and he didn't understand them. First thing he said to Steve Howe, who was stood there with a beautiful new electric guitar was (*puts on a thick Greek accent*), "The electric guitar is not a proper instrument, you know." That was the first and last day Vangelis worked with Yes.

Each member of Yes then made a solo LP, with *Olias Of Sunhillow* the only one to reach the UK Top 10. Then *Going For The One*

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◅ (1977) saw Wakeman back in the band and restored some equilibrium. Was this a happier time?

Yes, because *Going For The One* was a good album. I felt like I'd been out there in a lifeboat and I was able to pull myself back to reality. There's a song on there called Awaken, and the way I think of it is, we did *Topographic Oceans* so we could make Awaken.

But you and Rick Wakeman both left after 1978's *Tormato*. What was going through your mind then?

It was a tougher time for bands like us. Yes wanted to make more commercial music, I just wanted to make good music. Drugs had come in too. Cocaine's a bitch. I tried it once and didn't like it. But others did. It was the food of choice, and not just in the band, but everywhere in the business. It was a very upside-down world.

There are also stories of you butting heads with Yes's manager, Brian Lane, who was frustrated by you putting the music ahead of the money. Is this true?

For me, it's never been about being rich and famous. I used to tell him, I have work to do. "Really? You must be mad then." Brian's famous statement was, "I didn't make the rules, I just play the game." And that's what he does. He plays the game, and it's a horrible game. But I understand it. There's a dark side to everything, including rock'n'roll.

After Yes, you signed to Virgin as a solo artist.

I met Richard Branson on his boat and he signed me the same week they signed Phil Collins. All of a sudden there's Phil making *Face Value*, one of the greatest solo albums of all time, and Virgin are sending two punks with dyed black hair and eye make-up down to the south of France to see what I was doing.

What *were* you doing?

Writing music for an album about the great [French-Russian] artist Marc Chagall, and another piece based on a book called A True Fairy Tale by Daphne Charters. These guys didn't like what they were hearing. There was nothing wrong with the music, but they just weren't interested. I said, "OK, but this is what I want to do." So I paid the advance back.

A concept LP about fairies or Marc Chagall was probably a hard sell in 1980, though?

It's probably a hard sell now! I'm working on it again, though, and we're looking at a possible musical or film, The Story Of Chagall. [Frasier actor] Kelsey Grammar is interested, and has talked about directing it.

Meanwhile, you'd teamed up with Vangelis and scored two Top 10 singles, I Hear You Now and I'll Find My Way Home, and wrote State Of Independence, a hit for Donna Summer. How do you view that collaboration now?

A happy time. I remember watching Vangelis doing the Blade Runner soundtrack around then too. He'd work on the score in the morning and then write a symphony in the afternoon. He was so spontaneous it was unbelievable. But we were having hits without trying to have hits, and that was different to Yes. State Of Independence is one of my favourite songs.

What do you like about it?

It was an instant piece of music. I walked into the studio in Paris where Vangelis was playing this rhythm, saw that the microphone was on and just started singing: "State of life, may I live, may I love…" The words and the melody poured out.

What other singers have inspired you?

Randy Newman, Elton John, Sirius XM have a Frank Sinatra channel, which I like to listen to. He used to have these introductory vocal ideas on his records, which is something I've always wanted to do. I like musicals too – South Pacific, My Fair Lady. I was watching [animated movie musical] Sing! last night.

***90125* [1983] started as a non-Yes project by ex-Yes members, before you returned and Yes were reborn. What was it like coming back?**

I'd been a bit lost out there in the world and wondering what I was going to do [Anderson's 1982 solo LP, *Animation*, had sold poorly]. Then I got a call from Chris Squire. Thank God, thank you Chris. I remember sitting in his Rolls-Royce outside my house listening to their new songs.

What did you think of them?

It all sounded great. I didn't challenge anything. I just went into the studio, sang and got out.

That's very hard to believe. It must have been strange working with Trevor Horn, your replacement in Yes [on *Drama*, 1980]?

YES PLEASE!

Three LPs of "Jon doing what Jon does," by **Mark Blake.**

THE BIG BANG

Yes

★★★★★

The Yes Album

(ATLANTIC, 1971)

After the uneven *Yes* and *Time And A Word*, Anderson helps steer their third album's dazzling amalgam of driving rock, whimsical folk, classical grandeur and clever-clogs jazz. Includes the staggeringly epic Yours Is No Disgrace, Anderson's charming Simon And Garfunkel-go-prog routine on I've Seen All Good People and his great forgotten Yes single, Your Move. Signposted the way to *Fragile* and Yes's evergreen hit, Roundabout.

THE POP PINNACLE

Jon And Vangelis

★★★★

The Friends Of Mr Cairo

(POLYDOR, 1981)

After Yes, Anderson threw in his lot with keyboard magus Vangelis. Their second LP collaboration showcased a singer unencumbered by earthquaking bass and fancy time signatures. Named after Peter Lorre's character in The Maltese Falcon, the title track, especially, has a lovely cinematic quality. Also contains the hit I'll Find My Way Home, and Donna Summer's future hit State Of Independence. "Someone sent it to her producer Quincy Jones," recalls Anderson.

THE MIGHTY MAKEOVER

Yes

★★★★

90125

(ATCO, 1983)

In 1983, Yes needed Anderson, but Anderson also needed Yes. His recent vocal replacement, Trevor Horn, turned producer and with the help of new guitarist Trevor Rabin, dragged the band out of their '70s comfort zone. Horn applied the production tics and electronic squiggles he'd just used on ABC's *The Lexicon Of Love* and the Into Battle With The Art Of Noise EP to future hits Owner Of A Lonely Heart and Leave It. But the fancy chords and Anderson's peerless vocals made it sound like Yes.

"There are times you look back and ask, What were you *thinking*?": Jon Anderson at Lightning Joe's Guitar Heaven, Arroyo Grande, California, December 8, 2023.

Well, I do remember telling Chris that the chorus for Owner Of A Lonely Heart was a hit, but the verses were a bit blah. I suggested making them more staccato – (*sings*) "Da-da-da… da-da-da-da-da-da…" I'd loved Trevor Horn's production for Malcolm McLaren [on 1982's Buffalo Gals hit] so it was exciting getting to know the guy. Also I'd been in the doldrums, not sure where to go. The rest is history, but the next LP, *Big Generator* [1987], was a big pain in the butt.

Owner Of A Lonely Heart went to Number 1 in the US. You must have sensed the record company wanted more like that?

You have to ask yourself, though – do you make music to make money? There are certain times when you do, because you need to survive. But there are certain times when it gets in the way.

You formed Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe, before Yes reconvened for 1991's *Union* and '94's *Talk*. Rebooting your solo career proved challenging, though?

After …Lonely Heart, my record company asked what I wanted to do and I suggested an LP of Latin American music, and they stopped the cheque (*laughs*). So I made *In The City Of Angels* instead [with songs written by Lamont Dozier and members of Toto]. I thought I was going to become a pop star again but it wasn't a big hit. There are times when you look back and ask yourself, What were you *thinking*? And other times, Why didn't more people like that one?

“When I’m out there singing on my own I still think I’m part of Yes. They still feel like my songs.”

Is there a great lost Jon Anderson solo LP?

I’d say *Toltec* [1996]. There were many different styles of music on there, but I was also chasing Carlos Castaneda, who wrote books about a Yacqui shaman [including 1968’s The Teachings Of Don Juan: A Yacqui Way Of Knowledge]. I like the idea that we’re all connected to a divine energy, we are all indigenous people but Native Americans grew up adoring mother Earth and we went the other way.

You were writing songs with an ecological message in the ’70s. Is there a part of you that now feels vindicated?

No, but I like that the idea of saving the planet isn’t crank thinking any more. It’s about saving *us*. We are all one collectively on the planet, and we are all refugees.

You mentioned opening up your state of consciousness after reading The Finding Of The Third Eye in the ’70s, but when did you start practising meditation?

I always knew meditation was good for you, but I didn’t start until the mid-’80s when I met my spiritual teacher. I’ve been writing a memoir but I only got as far as ’86 when I discovered my teacher. From then on, I’ve just been spinning around the world, doing my work.

Roger Kisby

Will you ever finish the book?

I hope to. I have a guy who’s helping manage me and I sent him what I’d written and he said, “Do some more!” But I’m busy. I used to paint a lot and I haven’t done any of that for a whole year.

Chris Squire died in 2015 and Alan White in 2022, but you were estranged from Yes by then.

Life is full of experiences and meeting people, and you look back and think, I used to know him so well, but not any more. Alan was best man at my wedding [to second wife, Jane, in 1997]. I’ve had dreams about them both. I was in Maui when I dreamt about an angel pointing upwards and there was Chris looking up into the sky with tears running down his face. I found out the following day he’d left the earth.

You joined Yes for their induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2017. But has communication between yourself and Steve Howe stopped now, too?

Yes. We’re still friends but we’re not connected. The first time I realised it wasn’t going to continue was when I discovered you could send MP3s on the computer. So I e-mailed Steve and Chris, saying, “Why don’t we send music to each other – we’re on the same planet?” And they never replied. Maybe they never got the e-mail.

Could you see yourself performing with Yes again?

I was talking to The Band Geeks and said, “Hopefully we can play in London and Steve will get up and do a couple of songs with us, maybe Rick too…” It just means *talking*. When I’m out there singing on my own I still think I’m part of Yes. They still feel like my songs.

Do you have any plans to stop making music?

No. Just before lockdown, the day we were told we couldn’t go out any more, I was making a barbecue, slipped and broke my foot in two places. So I spent the next three months on crutches, in the studio. It was a revelation. Music is a driving force to me. I have to keep moving.

The Yes Album (Super Deluxe Edition) is out now on Rhino Records.

EVERYTHING BEAUTIFUL IS FAR AWAY

WITH THEIR ON-STAGE FOLIAGE AND BACKWOODS FACE-FUNGUS, **GRANDADDY** CLOSED THE '90S AS GLORIOUS ENIGMAS, MASTERS OF A UNIQUE AND STRANGE KIND OF HEART-TUGGING INDIE ROCK. IN 2024, FIGHTING DRINK AND DEPRESSION, THEIR TROUBLED LEADER HAS RETURNED TO RECLAIM THE NAME AND, PERHAPS, RENEW A VOCATION. "I'M SEEING A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL," HE TELLS **BOB MEHR**.

PHOTOGRAPH BY **ANDY WILLSHER**.

Andy Willsher

Come to 'Daddy: Grandaddy (from right) Jason Lytle, Kevin Garcia, Jim Fairchild, Tim Dryden and Aaron Burtch, London, 1998.

TO HEAR HIM TELL IT, JASON LYTLE HAS BEEN SEEKING REFUGE most of his life. As a kid he found it listening to his favourite records. As a teenager he sought it in the world of competitive skateboarding. Later, he achieved it by making his own beautifully cracked pop music. These days, the veteran singer-songwriter and Grandaddy leader gains solace in the great outdoors.

"You know, I've had issues with drinking over the years," Lytle says unprompted, a couple of hours into a video interview with MOJO. The plan had originally been to meet him at his Los Angeles home to discuss Grandaddy's forthcoming album, *Blu Wav*. But a series of personal matters have come up; Lytle's been caring for his ailing mother and, as it transpires, he's been recovering from a bout with drink and depression.

"It's so crazy 'cos when I'm not drinking, I'm very healthy. I have a great diet, I enter these long-distance bike events, I do trail running. It's how I find my equilibrium," says Lytle, clad in a puffer jacket with a cap slung slow. "Then something bad happens... and I lose my shit.

"I'll end up like binge drinking for weeks at a time. It's serious," he adds. "I had a few big gnarly wake-up calls, recently actually. I'm doing well now. And I will continue to do well. But it's always been very confusing to me, this wide swinging pendulum. Therapy has helped, but so has hitting rock bottom a few times, and having the life scared out of me."

He smiles wanly and offers what sounds like a Grandaddy lyric but feels like the truth: "Nothing straightens you out more than being in fear of losing it all." ➢

Elder statesman: (left) Grandaddy's Jason Lytle strums away, 2023; (above) I'll get my goat: the band (clockwise from front) Lytle, Dryden, Burtch, Fairchild and Garcia at Spitalfields Farm, London, June 21, 2000.

LYTLE'S STORY BEGINS IN THE CENTRAL CALIFORNIA city of Modesto, where he was born in 1969, the youngest of four children. His parents split when he was five. "My mom went off to find herself," Lytle says, "and I ended up going with my dad." The family settled in tiny Denair, a farm town about 20 minutes outside Modesto. "I grew up out in the country," says Lytle. "We had a little rental house in the middle of a peach orchard. And that's where my dad met my stepmom."

It was a fortuitous meeting, as Lytle's stepmom worked at a local FM radio station that happened to be shutting down. "So she just raided their albums and I inherited about 150 records that were all current at the time, 1976 or 1977. I drew a lot as a kid and so I would listen to those records with headphones on. That developed my fascination with music."

His family tell him that he was soon inventing melodies of his own. He played drums, then guitar, immersing himself in The Beatles' baroque productions and the shimmering '70s sounds of The Cars and ELO. His other, more public, passion was skateboarding, a talent he pursued as a career throughout his teens, until, after a series of injuries, he finally tore his ACL completely in half.

"It became clear, this is done," says Lytle. "Everything I had been working towards, everything I'd made all these sacrifices for, it was over. It was like, OK, I guess I'm gonna play music now."

Taken under the wing of a girlfriend's dad – "a guy who did engineering work, was very blue collar, but very intellectual as well" – Lytle made what was, for him, "a ton of money" in his mentor's sewage reclamation business. Enough to buy some recording gear and musical equipment.

"I got a house with some friends, and took over the basement, and literally taught myself how to write and how to record, just by reading books on songwriting and making records," he says. "The first year I was cranking shit out eight to 10 hours a day."

Around 1992, Lytle became intrigued with the idea of playing his songs live. He missed the adrenaline of skating in front of crowds and figured he might find the same rush on-stage. Even with his bad knee, Lytle had resumed skateboarding casually, and it was at a local skate shop that he met drummer Aaron Burtch and bassist Kevin Garcia, teaming up with them for the earliest incarnation of Grandaddy.

"I didn't really know what it was," says Burtch of Lytle's early music, which drew on the dynamics of the Pixies but possessed a strange ethereal quality. "I couldn't really categorise it. But I knew it was good and different and I was all in from the very beginning."

Over the next few years, Grandaddy would coalesce, adding guitarist Jim Fairchild, who'd been playing in local thrash bands, and keyboardist Tim Dryden, another old skateboarding pal of Lytle's. One of their cassette-only releases somehow made its way into the hands of a fledgling indie label, Will Records, who signed the group. The $5,000 advance was enough to buy a used van and get Grandaddy on the road for its first tour in 1996.

Lytle estimates the five-week jaunt saw the band play to 150 people in total, and net at most $700. In other words, a disaster. Yet the band caught a break that fall, when the singer worked up his nerve and gave a copy of a Grandaddy tape to Giant Sand frontman Howe Gelb after a show in San Francisco.

"I was super drunk, handed him the tape and didn't even say anything," laughs Lytle. "Howe eventually listened to it. He claimed it got stuck in the cassette player of his truck and so he was forced to listen to it about 150 times."

GELB WAS SMITTEN. HIS MANAGER ALSO HAPPENED to be A&R'ing for Richard Branson's V2 label, and she secured Grandaddy a deal. Meanwhile, Lytle's writing had evolved from his early Pixies and Pavement pastiches into full-blown concept albums filled with forlorn, beautiful songs about alcoholic robots and cosmic ennui. Grandaddy seemed an earthier counterpart to Radiohead, a less consciously whimsical alternative to The Flaming Lips, and critics – particularly those in the UK – lapped up their first two proper full-length albums, *Under The Western Freeway* (1997) and *The Sophtware Slump* (2000).

Beyond their music, Grandaddy's woolly beards and John Deere caps were a subject of fascination. "We didn't look like your typical band," says Burtch. "That probably got us more attention than we

Dustin Aksland, Alamy (2), Sarah Lee/Eyevine, Getty

Sophtware **update: (main pic) Lytle performing at Bush Hall, Shepherd's Bush, London, March 20, 2003; (right) Jason horsing about at home in Montana, 2006; (below right) Grandaddy and lupine friend on Later With Jools Holland, 2000.**

"FOR ME, THE DRIVING FORCE WAS ALWAYS WANTING TO GET BETTER. THAT SONG WAS SAD – WELL, I WANT TO MAKE ONE FUCKING SADDER." JASON LYTLE

would've had otherwise. But it was annoying too because it wasn't, like, a *costume*. I've looked exactly the same for the last 30 years."

"We looked how we looked, and then we played this weird sad sci-fi music, and the stage was like a junk shop filled with broken gear," says Lytle. "I think it was all a bit confusing to people and maybe that was a part of the attraction too."

At Grandaddy's peak, they were touring with Elliott Smith and Coldplay and seeing celebs such as David Bowie and Kate Moss turning up at their gigs. "There's no real way to prepare anybody for that," says Fairchild. "As kids from a place like Modesto, you couldn't even allow yourself to have those dreams."

Audience members started coming up to Lytle, recounting intense, often profound experiences with his songs. The singer leaned into it. "For me, the driving force was always wanting to get better," he says. "That song was sad – well, I want to make one fucking sadder. I want to make the saddest goddamn song ever."

But the pressure on the band to progress began to take its toll. Lytle responded by assuming even more control of the music, recording 2006's *Just Like The Fambly Cat* almost entirely on his own (with Burtch on drums). Just before the album's release, Grandaddy abruptly announced they were breaking up. Lytle would go on to support the record briefly as a duo with Jackpot's Rusty Miller, mostly as a sop to the record company. But Grandaddy were, for all intents and purposes, over.

"People always look at Grandaddy and say, 'You were a band on the verge of a breakthrough, on the verge of greatness' – but I actually don't see it like that," says Lytle. "If things had gotten any crazier or we were any more popular, or more accepted by the public, I wouldn't have been able to handle it. What we accomplished and what we did was all I could take."

"Jason was almost savant-like in his ability to put sounds together and make songs," says Fairchild. "But the pressure was on him to be this great band leader too. And I'm not throwing shade, but he's not a good leader in that sense. He's not a boardroom dude."

To Fairchild, the inherent paradox of Grandaddy was simply too hard to maintain. "[As the songwriter] Jason had all this income that we didn't have," adds Fairchild. "And it was never talked about. We didn't know how to talk to each other about that shit. So there was this pressure he didn't want, and there was an imbalance in the way things were rewarded. As a band, we had a closeness and chemistry and interaction that was beyond any group I ever saw. But then one of us was totally separate too. We didn't know how to navigate that."

Lytle also admits that by the end of the band his personal habits had become a problem.

"In terms of the lifestyle, I'd had issues since I was 16," he reveals. "I came from alcoholic parents, I was predestined and preprogrammed for that stuff," he says. "I was getting drunk and then sustaining the drunkenness with drugs. I was up for the adventure for a lot of years, but I needed it all to end."

LYTLE WOULD LEAVE GRANDADDY AND MODESTO behind, moving to Bozeman, Montana and putting out a solo album, *Yours Truly, The Commuter* in 2009. "It was a huge deal for me, just living a life that wasn't attached to being in a band," he says. "Instinctually I knew it was important for me to release something under my own name. I had to embrace that division – and also, be sensitive to the guys as well. The fact that everything had come to an end, I was going to let it remain there."

Lytle followed it with 2012's *Dept. Of Disappearance*, married his longtime girlfriend and moved to Portland, Oregon. Meantime, Fairchild began a long, fruitful run as a guitarist/songwriter with Modest Mouse. Even Burtch found his confidence playing in a series of regional bands including The Good Luck Thrift Store Outfit. "I realised I'd only really ever played in Grandaddy," says Burtch, who'd borne the brunt of Lytle's perfectionism. "I needed to be in a situation where I was happy to play music that wasn't scary or nerve-wracking."

Then, in 2012, after more than six years apart, Grandaddy – which had seen its reputation and popularity grown *in absentia* – unexpectedly announced a handful of reunion dates. ➢

Postcard from the edge: Lytle and Fairchild with missing band members, Amsterdam, 2000.

POPS MUSIC

FIVE OLD FAVOURITES FROM THE GRANDADDY AND JASON LYTLE LOCKER. BY JOHN MULVEY.

GRANDADDY
under the western freeway
(Big Cat/Will, 1997)

Pavement originated 30 miles from Grandaddy's Modesto home, and you can hear slacker-indie echoes of them on this homebrewed debut. But instead of Malkmus's adopted big city smarts, Lytle leans into a dreamy, semi-rural alienation: "Here I sit and play guitar/Drink beer out in the country." A.M. 180 and Summer Here Kids remain, perversely, as close as they ever got to anthems.

GRANDADDY
the sophtware slump
(V2, 2000)

The early pinnacle of Lytle's "weird sad sci-fi music", malfunctioning synths embraced as design attribute rather than professional inconvenience. An introvert's response to The Flaming Lips' *The Soft Bulletin*, Grandaddy's second is also classic stealth confessional: the preoccupation with trashed technology and built-in obsolescence masks Lytle's reckoning with alcoholism and relationship fall-out.

GRANDADDY
sumday
(V2, 2003)

Equipment upgrades don't materially alter the fragility of Lytle's songs, now sounding like close cousins of Sparklehorse. Notable, too, how his discomfort with the pressures of even marginal success are feeding into stressed-out lyrical allegories: "At the desktop there's crying sounds/For all the projects due."

JASON LYTLE
yours truly, the commuter
(Anti-, 2009)

If the last album of Grandaddy's original run (*Just Like The Fambly Cat*, 2006) was a *de facto* Lytle solo album, his solo debut proper resembles a fractionally brighter, fractionally bolder Grandaddy, the unsteady ELO influence pushed to the fore. Freed of bandleader obligations, relocated to wild Montana, Lytle has rarely sounded so near to contentment.

GRANDADDY
Blu Wav
(Dangerbird, 2024)

Another Lytle solo record in all but name (following 2017's Grandaddy comeback, *Last Place*), and while he sees it as a career "sea change", it also plays like a serene, ethereal update of the Grandaddy aesthetic circa *The Sophtware Slump*, the fluttering synths now augmented by equally lachrymose pedal steel. A strategic retreat to the Cabin In My Mind.

➢ "I'm not going to lie, I'm sure I was enticed by the money part of it," says Lytle. "But the people speak, and the people were very into the idea of Grandaddy coming back."

The initial reunion shows were followed by more in 2016. By then, Lytle had come around to the idea of doing another Grandaddy album. "You always hear people say that if you're making music for anyone other than yourself it's not art," he says. "But I was inspired by how much love, how much affection, there was for the band from [the fans]. That was the driving force behind the making of that album."

Lytle also notes that the end of his five-year marriage further fuelled the creation of what would become Grandaddy's fifth LP, *Last Place*. "I was going through a divorce in a rainy city and a draughty apartment," he says, chuckling. "So I built a studio in the living room and started making the record."

By the time *Last Place* was ready for release in the spring of 2017, Grandaddy seemed to be a serious going concern once again. The group had confirmed plans to tour internationally and make the rounds of the festival circuit. Lytle even made the decision – once unthinkable to him – to move back to Modesto. "I came to be close to the home base and be close to the band," he says. "That was my commitment."

Fairchild remembers the resumption of Grandaddy as a moment of tremendous possibility and profound meaning. "There was this one time on-stage where I looked around and this massive flood of appreciation came over me in a way that I've never experienced," he says. "And I probably can't even get this out without crying… but I just looked at Kevin, and I looked at Aaron, and Tim and Jason… and realised everything I have in my life that I love, appreciate and value is because of my relationship with these four people. And then… Kevin passed away a few weeks later."

In May 2017, the 41-year-old Garcia suffered a massive stroke, and died a day later in a Modesto hospital, surrounded by his family and friends. Grandaddy scrapped all its tour plans as the band members went into mourning.

"That pushed me over the edge," says Lytle of Garcia's passing. "I was stuck in Modesto grieving with no reason to be there and no intention of carrying on the promotion of that album. I was sort of lost. I sat on my back patio in this shitty little apartment complex and just drank and answered all the social media condolences about Kevin.

"I underestimated how big a blow that was. I have a history of painting over these big catastrophic moments in my life – trying to brush them aside and just saying, OK, I'll power though this. A ton of therapy probably would've been really, really helpful. Instead, I went the opposite direction, talking to no one and internalising everything."

AFTER LEAVING MODESTO AGAIN, FIRST FOR Northern California's East Bay, Lytle eventually decided to relocate to Southern California, settling in a quiet suburb of LA near the Angeles National Forest. He arrived just as the Covid-19 pandemic was hitting, and the isolation of the period brought him back to a musical idea he had pondered for several years, one that had first come to him on his travels out west.

"I was on a driving trip, something I do a lot, driving these long distances, allowing the brain to wander," he says. "It was a lightning strike idea based on this old song, The Tennessee Waltz [by Patti Page]. It was this slow, lilting, sweet bluegrass waltz. I wondered if you took this style of waltz-time music and drenched it in synths, really dense synths, and put some simple lyrics on top of it, what would it sound like? I became fixated on this idea; it wouldn't let me alone. As time went on – months, years even – I still couldn't shake it."

Finally, in 2022, Lytle began work on the project in earnest. Although he played and tracked drums at a proper studio in Eagle Rock, he recorded the balance of the album at home. "I got the OK from my partner to take up about half of the bedroom with this big mess of gear," he says. Lytle handles all the instruments on the album, save for the prominent and atmospheric pedal steel provided

Getty

by Max Hart, known for his work with The War On Drugs and Melissa Etheridge.

Lytle sees the resulting *Blu Wav* as an extended mood piece, akin to the "hard or soft left-turn Beck took with *Sea Change*," he says. "In terms of my catalogue, it might be the sea change, literally. I'm hoping that's the case."

When the album was done Lytle wasn't quite sure how to bill it. "I felt it was going to be such a departure from the Grandaddy records I've made, that I should call it a Jason Lytle album. But then I got fascinated with the idea of calling it Grandaddy. I mean, the working process is identical to how I've made Grandaddy records in the past. And then there's the practical reason for calling it Grandaddy – which is that I want more people to hear it."

By this point, Fairchild had left Modest Mouse for a job as head of A&R for Los Angeles indie Dangerbird Records. The label, which had already partnered with Lytle on a couple of Grandaddy reissues – including a 20th anniversary remaster of *The Sophtware Slump* accompanied by a new solo piano rendition of the album – signed Lytle for the new record. During a hiking outing with Fairchild in 2023, Lytle first broached the idea of billing *Blu Wav* as a Grandaddy project. "My response was, You make Grandaddy records, call it Grandaddy," says Fairchild.

FOR THE OTHER MEMBERS OF Grandaddy, Lytle's decision to take complete ownership of the band and its brand is complicated.

"So much of my life was spent wishing I had more agency in Grandaddy in terms of the music," says Fairchild. "But now I'm just happy for Grandaddy to exist however it exists – for Jason, for the fans. And if someday we all make shit together again, fine. In any case, all those hang-ups are gone for me."

It's a different story for Burtch, who says he's "out of the loop" when it comes to Grandaddy business. "I guess that's how Jason wants it," he says. "I haven't talked to him in a few years." Burtch's comments register less like anger than hurt. "I spent 16 hours a day doing band shit for years and years and years. And I was on every single Grandaddy record, up to this new one. So I'm not super stoked on the current state of things."

For Lytle, the delicacies of band politics have, frankly, been a secondary concern, given his recent family and personal struggles, specifically the care of his ailing mother.

"My mom is a real curmudgeon, a real hermit. I'm the last person on the planet that she has," he says. "She excommunicated my older brother and sister, I haven't talked to them in 20-plus years. Her favourite kid was my other sister who died of cancer. So I'm the person who's left in charge of taking care of her."

After dealing with her hospitalisation and moving her in and out of numerous apartments and care homes, Lytle finally brought his mother to live at a facility close to him. But the stress of dealing with all that sent him down a rabbit hole of drink and despair. At least, for a while.

"I'm not drinking now. And I'm seeing a light at the end of the tunnel," he says. "I'm also at the point where I'm tired of making excuses. I should be able to handle this shit and be a grown man and have functional coping abilities."

As he returns to talking about his music, Lytle's voice cracks a little. "For some reason if I were to give up hope on myself... I believe there's an evil in that," he says. "I don't want to say I've been given this gift, or I've been allowed to be this vessel or whatever – because that sounds like I'm up my own ass. But I don't know – maybe I am a conduit for this music that moves a few people and puts a little good in the world. I definitely don't want to give up on that."

"IF THINGS HAD GOTTEN ANY CRAZIER OR WE WERE ANY MORE POPULAR, I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HANDLE IT." JASON LYTLE

Dustin Aksland

Milking it: Jason Lytle in 2023 – still putting a little good in the world.

Hold on, they're coming: the brothers in blues Dan Aykroyd (left) and John Belushi, 1980; (opposite) Belushi and Aykroyd give respect to Aretha Franklin on The Blue Brothers' set.

Mission Accomplished

The dream of two comedians obsessed by blues and R&B, panned by critics but adored by generations of fans, *The Blues Brothers* carried a torch for the greats of the genre at a time when the music and movie industries could care less. Adapted from his new book about the film and its stars, *Daniel de Visé* relates the drugs, the jeopardy and the idealism behind a cult classic.

ONE AUTUMN NIGHT IN 1974, AN oddly proportioned Albanian appeared in silhouette in the doorway of the Old Firehall, the Toronto theatre that housed a struggling satellite cast of the famed Chicago improv comedy company, Second City.

"He had a hexagonal driver's cap on, and he had a white cable-knit sweater and a white scarf and a pack of cigarettes and a butt going, and sneakers, totally under-dressed for Canada," recalled Dan Aykroyd, one of the Second City Canadians.

John Belushi needed no introduction. He was Second City royalty, a breakout star of the Chicago troupe who had decamped to New York to attain even greater fame in a series of productions staged by the humour magazine National Lampoon. In Lemmings, a pioneering musical comedy revue that parodied Woodstock, Belushi's beer-spewing Joe Cocker impression had brought the house down.

Aykroyd didn't usually open up around new people, but he felt immediately at ease with Belushi. They talked for hours at the 505 Club, an after-hours speakeasy that Aykroyd ran with some friends, Belushi downing whiskey, Aykroyd cracking beers. Belushi loved Aykroyd's threadbare tavern. And he loved the music Aykroyd was playing on a phonograph atop a refrigerator.

"What is this?" he asked. "This is a great record."

"Oh," Dan replied, "it's just a local blues band."

Belushi explained that he was from Chicago: naturally, he had heard the blues. "But I'm into heavy metal."

"Well, John, you show me heavy metal and I'll show you the blues."

Aykroyd spun records by Fenton Robinson and Magic Slim, and schooled Belushi on the music of his own hometown. The latter listened with growing interest. "This stuff is amazing," he said. "Maybe we should put a band together sometime."

Aykroyd said he already had one in mind: an R&B duo, modelled on Sam & Dave, but whiter and seedier, a pair of "classic recidivist American characters".

A well-known local musician, Howard Shore, overheard their conversation. He offered, "You could call it the Blues Brothers."

APRIL 22, 1978. DAN AYKROYD ADJUSTED HIS thin, black tie in the dressing-room mirror. He was a perfectionist, and his Elwood Blues persona was perfect: baggy black suit with narrow lapels, black trilby hat, Timex watch, crisp white shirt, and vintage black Ray-Bans. In front of his own dressing-room mirror, John Belushi assembled his 'Joliet' Jake Blues ensemble with sloppy imprecision. His collar didn't quite fit. His hat was brown.

The cold open commenced. "I went balling the other night," Belushi snarled. "I started drinking and got real tight." That was the opening lyrical salvo to Hey Bartender, a 1955 blues standard by Texas singer Floyd Dixon, and this was the debut performance of the Blues Brothers as musical guests on NBC-TV's comedy behemoth, Saturday Night Live.

Was this an elaborate skit? Was it serious? No one seemed to care. As the musicians hung on the last note, Belushi grabbed the microphone and loosed a primal scream. The audience exploded in applause.

Aykroyd and Belushi had already come a long way since that night in Toronto, but they had never forgotten the Blues Brothers. In the late summer of 1975 they'd both been hired to the cast of SNL, the brainchild of deadpan Canadian producer Lorne Michaels, and had helped to fuel the irreverent show's runaway success, Belushi with his short-tempered ➤

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➢ samurai, Aykroyd with his spot-on Jimmy Carter and TV cook Julia Child.

In November 1975, they'd parlayed their R&B duo into a pre-broadcast warm-up act. In January 1976, it made the show, the band donning shades and bee costumes as Belushi sang the old Slim Harpo tune, I'm A King Bee, and Aykroyd played harmonica. The bandleader was their old pal Howard Shore.

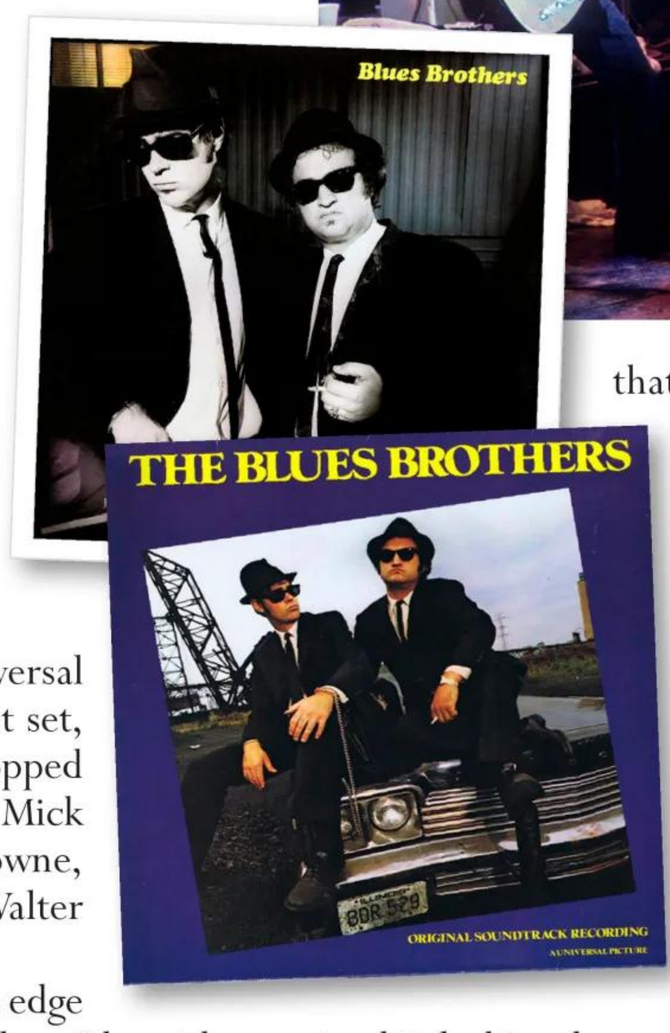
Blues-wise, Belushi was evolving from neophyte to aficionado. The next year in Oregon, while filming his landmark role, 'Bluto' Blutarski, in National Lampoon's Animal House, he fell in with a Pacific Northwest bluesman named Curtis Salgado, whose band featured future guitar star Robert Cray. One night, Salgado allowed the comedian on-stage to sing Hey Bartender. Belushi did his Joe Cocker voice, which was his comfort zone. After the show, he asked Salgado, "What did you think?"

"John," Salgado replied, "it's Joe Cocker." He reached over and tapped John on the heart. "You gotta be yourself," he said, "and you gotta come from here. That's what music is about."

Now, in the wake of the barnstorming April 22 broadcast, the game had changed. By the summer of 1978, the Blues Brothers had secured a $125,000 contract with Atlantic Records and were booked to open for comedian Steve Martin in a nine-night stand at Universal Amphitheatre in Los Angeles in the fall.

The spoof band was becoming a reality.

Let the good times roll: (above) The Blues Brothers' director John Landis (left) and Aykroyd plus script, 1979; (below) Blues Brothers at Winterland, San Francisco, December 31, 1978.



BELUSHI AND AYKROYD SET ABOUT recruiting musicians. Their first hire was Steve Jordan, the SNL drummer. The Brothers tapped SNL saxophonist Lou Marini and trombonist Tom Malone. Malone recruited trumpeter Alan Rubin. For lead guitarist, they hired Matt 'Guitar' Murphy, a blues master who had played with Howlin' Wolf. Paul Shaffer, the SNL pianist, became bandleader. To round out their Sam & Dave homage, the Blues Brothers hired Steve 'The Colonel' Cropper and Donald 'Duck' Dunn, the guitarist and bassist, respectively, for the actual Stax house band.

The Blues Brothers' nine-day residency at Universal Amphitheatre unfolded like a dream. After the first set, Dan and John pulled Jordan into their trailer and popped a bottle of Dom Pérignon. A knock at the door, and Mick Jagger and Linda Ronstadt walked in. Jackson Browne, Joe Cocker and Henry Winkler milled outside. Walter Matthau pocketed a Blues Brothers badge for his kid.

That first night, 'Blue' Lou Marini stood near the edge of the stage. "And I'm out there looking at Jack Nicholson," he said. "And we're playing 'B' Movie Box Car Blues. And he looked up at me, and he lifted up his sunglasses, and he went, 'Wow.'"

Back in New York, Belushi and Aykroyd opened a speakeasy in the basement of a four-story tenement at Hudson and Dominick streets, near the Holland Tunnel. An echo of the old 505 club, it was a fetid, black-windowed space framed by peeling wallpaper, with wet floors and a truly frightening toilet. Keith Richards and Francis Ford Coppola tended bar. The Grateful Dead raised glasses with the SNL cast. Drinks were free, and a small stage beckoned. Here, Belushi and Aykroyd would perform blues standards with a pickup band that might include David Bowie, James Taylor or ZZ Top for an intimate audience of elite friends.

Briefcase Full Of Blues, the live album assembled from the Universal dates, dropped at Thanksgiving. The first pressing of 50,000 copies sold out in a week. By early 1979, the album was climbing toward the top of the Billboard album chart. Neither of the two postwar blues giants, B.B. King and Muddy Waters, had even cracked the Top 20.

Most music writers greeted the Blues Brothers album with surprising goodwill, a testament to the currency SNL still enjoyed in the counterculture. But not all were so kind. The biggest problem with the Blues Brothers wasn't Belushi's voice or Aykroyd's chops. They were two white guys fronting a mostly white band that played historically black music. In Rolling Stone, Dave Marsh theorised that the presence of Cropper and Dunn, the white Stax masters, was "the only thing keeping the Blues Brothers from slopping over into racist parody."

The rock'n'roll life fed Belushi's burgeoning drug habit. One day in February 1979, Keith Richards rolled into New York. He and Belushi embarked on a coke-fuelled binge. The next day, John arrived for the SNL broadcast almost incoherent. He staggered into his dressing room, collapsed on a couch, closed his eyes and moaned that he was too sick to go on. Someone summoned a doctor. He examined Belushi and summoned Lorne Michaels.

The doctor said Belushi could not perform. His lungs were filled with fluid. He might die.

"What are the odds of that?" Michaels asked.

"Fifty-fifty."

"I can live with those odds."

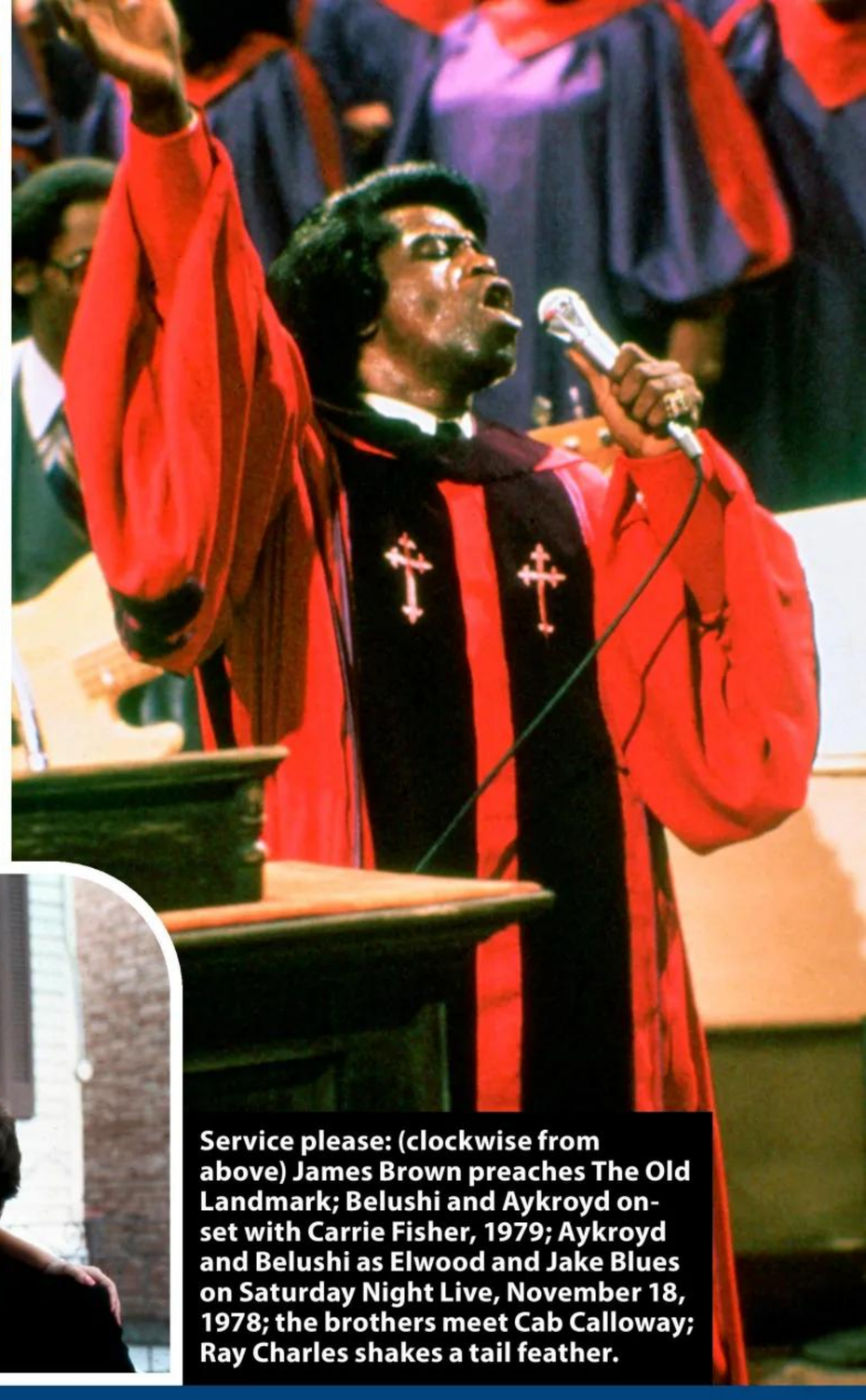
Belushi limped through the show, hoarse and sweating. One writer recalled it as "the one and only time I ever remember John being messed up at airtime." Outside the inner circle, hardly anyone noticed.

The next day, his wife Judy wrote in her diary: "John trouble."

THE PHENOMENAL SUCCESS OF ANIMAL HOUSE, released in the summer of 1978, elevated Belushi into an A-list movie star. Meanwhile, word spread through Hollywood of a possible Blues Brothers film. Aykroyd was toiling on a mammoth script – a love letter to Chicago, Belushi and blues. With Animal House director John Landis, he wrote parts for Aretha Franklin, James Brown, Ray Charles, Cab Calloway and John Lee Hooker. At the close of the 1970s, some of those titans were all but forgotten. Aykroyd hoped to revive their careers, a crusade he pursued with almost religious fervour. Landis worked that theme into the script with a line he wrote for Elwood Blues: "We're on a mission from God."

Universal film executives baulked at some of the musicians Landis

Getty (3), Alamy (2), Author's Collection (2)



Service please: (clockwise from above) James Brown preaches The Old Landmark; Belushi and Aykroyd on-set with Carrie Fisher, 1979; Aykroyd and Belushi as Elwood and Jake Blues on Saturday Night Live, November 18, 1978; the brothers meet Cab Calloway; Ray Charles shakes a tail feather.

"We're playing 'B' Movie Box Car Blues. And Jack Nicholson looked up at me, and he lifted up his sunglasses, and he went, 'Wow.'" **Lou Marini**

put forward. Cab Calloway and James Brown were ice cold. In place of Aretha Franklin, someone suggested Rose Royce, a funk-disco group assembled to record the theme song to the hit film Car Wash.

As production on the movie commenced in summer 1979, Franklin arrived to the pre-recording of her performance at the Universal Recording studio at Walton and Rush streets, Chicago, with her own backup singers, and her own arrangement of Think, her decade-old hit. After hearing the pre-recorded backing track, the singer announced, "I'd like to change the piano." She sat down at a Steinway and pounded out the song in an explosion of energy.

By day, Belushi and Aykroyd hung out at the studio, recording the rest of the Blues Brothers soundtrack with the band, selections including Taj Mahal's She Caught The Katy, Spencer Davis Group's Gimme Some Lovin' and Solomon Burke's Everybody Needs Somebody To Love, along with the local anthem Sweet Home Chicago, the Elvis classic Jailhouse Rock and the Rawhide TV theme. Paul Shaffer and Steve Jordan, unavailable for filming, were replaced by pianist Murphy Dunne and ex-Stax staple Willie Hall on drums. At night, the comedians made the rounds of Chicago blues clubs, hanging and jamming with local talent. When crowds grew too thick, the Brothers would hail a police car as if it were a cab and catch a ride back to their temporary home, the top floors of the Astor Tower, a modernist Gold Coast high rise that had hosted The Beatles.

Cocaine was everywhere. Tom 'Bones' Malone recalled a sound man on the set "who was The Man. You could buy a gram from him for a hundred bucks." Belushi fell into his usual pattern, arriving late to the set. His Wayfarers – a virtually discontinued brand that the movie's production assistants bought up from thrift stores – concealed bleary eyes, brimming with contrition. Studio executives did what they could to track his nocturnal travels.

By the final week of October, 1979, The Blues Brothers lagged 16 days behind schedule and millions of dollars over budget. The week started with Belushi and Aykroyd in an all-night jam with the Eagles, in town for a gig at Chicago Stadium, plus Jackson Browne. Libations flowed. "Thank God they had microphones to lean on," one attendee observed.

Late on the afternoon of October 25, a chilly Thursday, Landis and crew waited on Belushi, who refused to emerge from his trailer. Landis stomped up to the Winnebago and knocked on the door. Inside, Belushi sat with hair dishevelled, eyes vacant. Atop a desk sat a mound of cocaine.

"John, you're killing yourself," Landis cried. "Do not do this to my movie. Don't do this to me. Don't do this to Judy. Don't do it to yourself."

Belushi's head bobbed woozily. Landis scooped up the white powder – "probably a hundred thousand dollars' worth" – and flushed it down the toilet. Belushi stood, muttered, "Landis, you motherfucker," and charged at his director, trying to get to the remnants of his stash. They grappled like drunken wrestlers. Belushi wept, and their grapple melted into an embrace. Landis, too, burst into tears. "John, this is insane," he moaned.

Twice that week, Belushi failed to arrive on set. "Both times," Landis said, "we ended up taking the door off his room and calling the paramedics, because he had basically overdosed."

By the time the cast and crew of The Blues Brothers limped out of Chicago, the film's star and box-office draw had "almost died", not once but twice, Landis said. And the film was only half finished.

BACK IN LOS ANGELES, THE BLUES BROTHERS crew faced a complicated shoot inside the fictional Triple Rock Church, presided over by the Reverend Cleophus James, played by James Brown. Attempting to pre-record the music, producers had found that no two takes of the Godfather's vocals sounded alike. Now, they would tape him live, backed by James Cleveland's Southern California Community Choir, with ➢

Soul dining: Lou Marini blows hot during the Think scene; (right) Steve Jordan in 1981.

Fraternally Yours

Band members *Lou Marini* (sax) and *Steve Jordan* (drums) on the Blues Brothers' mixed blessings.

LOU MARINI: "It was going to be a good gig – that's what we thought. We'll fly out to LA, make some nice bread. There wasn't that much anticipation about it other than that. But Danny and John were so popular at that point on SNL that a lot of famous people were stopping by to hear the rehearsals, and they were flipping out. About the third night, when things were really gelling, we realised that besides it being a good gig, it was something special.

John was, of course, mercurial, and foolhardy. I remember once seeing him take a Quaalude and then drink a shot of bourbon and then snort half a gram of coke, all within a few minutes. I don't know, maybe there was a death wish or defiance there. But at the same time, he was so charismatic and so caring and so insightful.

In my diner scene with Aretha, I was determined to make sure that I knew my solo by heart, so that in the scene, I would be playing it accurately. Then I have to do the dance on the counter, and it's narrow, with the stoves and pots and pans behind me. It was nerve-wracking. And I was wearing bell bottoms! When I saw the scene back, I was disappointed, because they had cut part of my head off in the shot. And the assistant director said, "Well, Lou, you signed up for a lot of money and a little head, right?"

When the movie came out, there was almost like an animus towards it. We were a little disappointed when we went to the premiere here in New York, because we had done full scenes of dialogue that were cut from the movie. We also thought all the car chases and stunts were a bit over the top. But now, it's one of those movies, where if you're flipping channels, and it's on, you tend to stay with it. It's sort of a trip to know you were part of something that became a big part of pop culture.

At first, we took a lot of flak about ripping off blues musicians. But the same blues musicians told me that it had been a big boost for their careers. So I think it was a positive thing, bringing that music more to the forefront again."

STEVE JORDAN: "I joined the Saturday Night Live Band on the third season, and on the final show that season, the Blues Brothers were introduced. After that things moved really fast.

John [Belushi] and I lived only 10 blocks away from each other. So we were hanging out. And to his credit, he turned me on to a lot of real electric blues. I was more of an R&B, rock'n'roll person. Still, the lines got blurred, and the Blues Brothers became a pot pourri of blues and R&B – whatever John thought that he could do well. It was exciting because audiences didn't know what to expect. When we came out with I Can't Turn You Loose, people freaked out.

> **"It's a trip to know you were part of something that became a big part of pop culture."**
> **Lou Marini**

It was Michael Klenfner who'd signed John and Dan to Atlantic. [Atlantic head honcho] Ahmet Ertegun wasn't really all that excited about it. He definitely wasn't feeling Steve Cropper and Duck Dunn, maybe because of dealing with them through Stax or because he thought they were old hat. But the *Briefcase Full Of Blues* album went Number 1 in America in seven weeks and that really messed up Ahmet. He'd tolerated the idea of the band but now he had a Number 1 record!

Why wasn't I in the film? I'd been booked to tour Japan with The 24th St Band: Hiram Bullock, Will Lee, the wonderful Clifford Carter, and myself. John really wanted me to do it, but there is no question that I made the right decision. I mean, I have issues with the film. Like the final gig when the band is playing and nobody's supposed to like it, then all of a sudden the crowd are whipped into a frenzy of complete rapture, but nothing has changed! So I didn't like the way the music was depicted. And then the rest of it was just car crashes and chase scenes. So if you don't like the music, and you're not really into, like, Smokey And The Bandit, what's to like?"

As told to Bill DeMain and Danny Eccleston

➤ a cameo from the ascendant Chaka Khan.

Brown arrived on set looking "pretty spaced", music producer Bob Tischler recalled, but he whipped the flock into a frenzy on The Old Landmark, a blistering gospel stomper that Aretha Franklin had recorded on her *Amazing Grace* album. ("I searched and found the fastest gospel song I could find," Aykroyd recalled.) Acrobats twirled through the air, vaulting off hidden trampolines and soaring past a blue neon cross, a prop whose construction Landis had ordered in a moment of inspiration.

Amid this joyous chaos, the crew received word that Aretha Franklin was coming.

Unlike James Brown, Aretha Franklin had waffled on The Blues Brothers. She had never made a film, and she wasn't sure about playing a glorified waitress. Now, arriving in Los Angeles, she beheld a perfect reconstruction of a Maxwell Street diner on the Universal set. The Queen Of Soul was impressed.

There was only one problem – it became painfully clear she could not remember the lyrics to her famous song. Someone wrote the words on a pair of white boards and placed one at each end of the set, so Franklin could see them at any point in the routine. But she couldn't read them without her glasses.

By contrast, Ray Charles breezed through his scene in a Hollywood rebuild of Ray's Music Exchange. "I remember him laughing a lot and going to the little boy's room very frequently," said Murphy Dunne.

Meanwhile, the horn section made creative use of the music shop set's glass-topped display cases as Landis filmed. In one take, the musicians produced a dollar bill and pantomimed chopping out a line. In the third take, recalled Tom Malone, "Alan Rubin pulls out a gram of coke and lays it out on the glass countertop and we start to snort it." Landis yelled, "Cut!", stormed up to the group and cried, "What the fuck are you guys doing?" One of the horns reminded the director that he had instructed them to act like musicians.

When the time came for Charles to play, he and the crew found that the Rhodes electric piano had lost power. There was no time to find a new cord, so Brother Ray performed the song with assistant director David Sosna kneeling beneath him, holding two strands of bare, live electrical wire against exposed metal tabs at the keyboard's base. Every time Charles stomped on the pedals, Sosna winced.

The scene would mark the on-screen debut of the full Blues Brothers band, dancing like pros. In the editing room, George Folsey cut deftly back and forth between Ray's nimble performance and impromptu dancers filmed on a Chicago street, a Robert Crumb cartoon come to life.

But after all the effort, "the studio didn't want the scene in the movie, wanted me to cut it way, way down," Folsey said. Universal executives deemed Ray Charles a faded icon. Landis ignored the request.

DAYS BEFORE THE CRITICAL HOLLYWOOD Palladium shoot, the film's climactic scene, producers received an ominous call.

Belushi had been partying at someone's house in the Valley. A kid rode by on a skateboard. Belushi asked if he could give it a try. He promptly fell, landing hard on his knee. An orthopaedist fitted him with a knee brace he could wear beneath his black suit.

The Palladium scene demanded the usual concert calisthenics from Belushi. Landis offered to swap in a stuntman: Belushi waved him off.

Like so many Blues Brothers scenes, the Palladium shoot fell behind schedule. When the time came to film the final shots, the studio lacked extras to fill the seats. Producers ran an impromptu contest on a rock radio station. Many contest winners brought weed, and when the music started, they lit up. The plume of pot smoke triggered an aggressive response from the plain-clothes police Universal had hired to keep order. Police clashed with extras. Aggrieved patrons tore up Palladium bathrooms.

Filmmakers had intended to shoot the film's denouement inside Illinois' real Joliet Prison, but Landis concluded the facility's dining

Trouble brothers: (clockwise from above left) Keith Richards and Belushi with (centre) Paul Shaffer at rehearsals for Saturday Night Live, 1978; the BB band (from left) Steve Cropper, Matt Murphy, Donald Dunn, Willie Hall, Aykroyd, Belushi, Murphy Dunne, Tom Malone, Alan Rubin, Lou Marini; Dan and John meet Chicago Mayor Jane Byrne, 1980.

"John, you're killing yourself. Do not do this to my movie. Don't do this to me. Don't do it to yourself." John Landis

hall wasn't large enough for the vast musical number he hoped to stage and had studio artists build a replica on the Universal set. In the filmed scene, the first prisoner to climb on a table is Joe Walsh, the Eagles guitarist, in a cameo. This was an easy shoot for the musicians, pantomiming over a pre-recorded track. Before the cameras rolled, a few of them dropped acid.

By the close of the film's production, sobriety ran in short supply. When studio executives watched the dailies from the final musical number, they asked cinematographer Stephen Katz, "Where are the close-ups?"

"Close-ups?" the cinematographer scoffed. "Have you *seen* their eyes?"

ON FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 1980, THE BLUES BROTHERS opened. Landis and company braced for the reviews.

They were dreadful.

"Mr Belushi and Mr Aykroyd have only about three funny scenes during the course of a long, bloated saga," Janet Maslin opined in The New York Times. The Washington Post termed the film "a ponderous comic monstrosity".

Even worse, to some reviewers, was the director's unthinkable decision to conceal the eyes of his stars behind impenetrable sunglasses. Worst of all, some reviewers greeted The Blues Brothers as fundamentally racist. "People who love soul music and blues may have a little trouble accepting Aykroyd and Belushi as great performers in a movie that consigns the authentic greats to backup roles," David Denby wrote in New York magazine. "Belushi and Aykroyd doubtless intended to pay homage to the great black performers who have inspired them, but the homage often comes close to insult and outright rip-off."

The only praise seemed to come from Chicago. "Take your pick," Gene Siskel wrote in the Tribune. "The Blues Brothers is the year's best film to date; one of the all-time great comedies; the best movie ever made in Chicago. All are true, and, boy, is that ever a surprise."

Moviegoers agreed. The Blues Brothers earned $4.9 million in its first weekend and $7.9m in its first week, more than $1m a day. Only The Empire Strikes Back was doing better business. On July 16, Variety reported that The Blues Brothers had earned $25.7 million in 24 days, maintaining its blockbuster pace.

On Friday, June 27, the Blues Brothers – the band, with Jordan and Shaffer restored – went on tour, 25 shows in 13 cities. Belushi cleaned up admirably. He still wasn't much of a singer, but in concert, his showmanship prevailed. Reviewers wrestled with the paradox. The band travelled from Chicago to the Palladium in New York. Warm reviews followed the band through Philadelphia to Washington DC. On Saturday, July 26, they opened a week-long, valedictory stand at Universal Amphitheatre in Los Angeles.

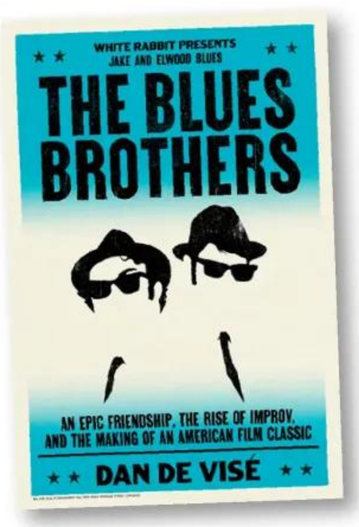
No one knew it then, but Belushi and Aykroyd would not perform as the Blues Brothers again. And John Belushi would never make another great movie, with Dan Aykroyd or without him.

He died on March 5, 1982, inside Bungalow 3, a two-bedroom, $200-a-night suite at Chateau Marmont in Los Angeles. He had overdosed on a speedball administered by groupie and singer Cathy Smith. In 1986, she would be sentenced to three years in prison for involuntary manslaughter.

In the years that followed, The Blues Brothers would ascend from maligned hit to cult classic to Important Film. Its critical currency rose alongside the stature of its stars. By the new millennium, critics and historians recognised Saturday Night Live as one of television's great achievements and the Belushi-Aykroyd ensemble as its greatest cast. The film gained further gravitas as arguably the finest work of John Landis, one of America's great comedic directors, and as a big, noisy, noir valentine to the city of Chicago.

Finally, The Blues Brothers earned immortality as a priceless artefact of American music. The Brothers and their director didn't know it in 1979, but their paper-thin SNL spin-off, their one-joke skit-turned-big-budget film, would stand as perhaps the finest cinematic showcase for several of the greatest musical artists of the century.

One August weekend in 2022, 5,000 fans watched Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi's brother Jim perform with the Blues Brothers Band at Old Joliet Prison in the inaugural Blues Brothers Con. Patrons lined up to purchase memorabilia at the same counter where Jake Blues had once collected his broken digital watch and used prophylactic. In a photograph from the event, captured by a Chicago Tribune photographer, Aykroyd gazed out at the crowd with the same beatific smile he had worn as he watched John Lee Hooker sing Boom Boom on Maxwell Street, his crazy blues dream made manifest. Ⓜ



This article is adapted from The Blues Brothers: An Epic Friendship, The Rise Of Improv, And The Making Of An American Film Classic, published by Atlantic Monthly Press and White Rabbit in March.

Getty, Author's Collection, Ken Regan/Camera5

a man you don't meet every day

scorning predictions of his demise, year upon year, shane macgowan is finally gone. what he leaves, in terms of his spirit and the music of the pogues – its poetry of defiance, devotion and degradation – is unlikely ever to be matched. but was there enough of it? "he wrote so many great songs in a short space of time," argues his friend and chronicler ann scanlon. "how many songwriters can say that?"

portrait by andrew catlin.

THE HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGE which led Shane MacGowan's funeral procession through the streets of Dublin on December 8, 2023, could have been taken straight out of a scene from James Joyce's festive masterpiece, The Dead.

A lone piper, a marching band and the rapturous applause of hundreds of onlookers, as the glass-sided carriage bearing the singer's coffin was pulled along by four black-plumed horses, gave MacGowan's send-off the look and feel of a state funeral.

As a Garda escort led the cortege out of Dublin's Southside to make the two-hour journey to MacGowan's spiritual heartland of Tipperary, a rainbow suddenly broke through the grey gloom of the city's skyline. It was a momentary flash of green and gold to match the Irish tricolour flag draped over the singer's coffin – a distinction usually reserved for presidents and soldiers of the Republic.

Along the way, other tricolours hung from motorway bridges and a lone busker sang a tribute from a layby as the coffin passed. But the warmest welcome came from the people of MacGowan's hometown of Nenagh. Children who'd been given the afternoon off school lined the rainy streets while tannoys rang out with If I Should Fall From Grace With God, and bars, bookies and banks featured portraits of The Pogues' frontman in their windows.

The scene at St Mary of the Rosary Church looked more like a sold-out rock concert than a requiem Mass, as hundreds of people tried to ➢

Andrew Catlin

Falling into heaven: Shane MacGowan, November 1988.

➢ find standing room in the aisles. President Michael D Higgins entered the church ahead of MacGowan, whose pall bearers included fellow Pogue Jem Finer, while Peadar O'Riada and his choir, Cór Cúil Aodha, sang Lúireach Phádraigh (Saint Patrick's Breastplate). Nick Cave, Bono, Finbar Furey, Camille O'Sullivan, Gerry Adams and actors Aidan Gillen and Johnny Depp were among the performers and speakers.

MacGowan's widow, Victoria Mary Clarke, led the presentation of 19 gifts which were brought to the altar to symbolise her husband's extraordinary life. These included a vinyl copy of *Led Zeppelin II*, books by J.P. Donleavy, James Joyce and Flann O'Brien, statues of the Buddha and the Madonna, a box of Barry's tea, a Tipperary flag, a hurley and the silver tray that Spider Stacy used to bash himself over the head with in the early days of The Pogues.

Officiating, Father Pat Gilbert described MacGowan as "a poet, lyricist, singer, trailblazer", comparing him with the great composer and arranger of traditional Irish music of the '50s and '60s, Seán O'Riada. "What Seán O'Riada had expressed in the life of liturgy," said Fr Gilbert, "Shane MacGowan expressed in the raw life of living."

After eulogies from Clarke and Shane's sister Siobhan, Jem Finer, Terry Woods, Spider Stacy and James Fearnley assembled beside their comrade's coffin, a simple wicker casket covered in red roses, to perform The Parting Glass. Before they began, Spider explained that Andrew Ranken, The Pogues' drummer, is very ill with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and couldn't travel, but that he had asked him to read a note to Shane and a short poem.

"Thank you, Shane," he began. "Thank you for the friendship. Thank you for the conversation. Thank you for the insights. Thank you for the laughter (at times, side-splitting hilarity). Thank you for the craftsmanship. Thank you for the poetry. Thank you for the soul. And thank you, Shane, above all, for those brilliant, timeless, shining songs."

The bells ring out: Shane MacGowan's funeral cortege en route from Dublin to St Mary of the Rosary Church, Nenagh, Co Tipperary, December 8, 2023; (bottom) *Led Zeppelin II*, an altar gift at MacGowan's requiem Mass; the Face of '76.

Tom Sheehan, Erica Echenburg/Getty, PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo (2), Charles McQuillan/Getty (3)

BORN IN PEMBURY, KENT, ON CHRISTMAS Day 1957, Shane MacGowan shared a birthday with Jesus Christ. He died on November 30, the last day of the traditional Month of The Dead, a departure date he shared with his literary forefathers Oscar Wilde and Patrick Kavanagh. It seems apt. MacGowan fused the wit and punk spirit of Wilde with the Irish heart and soul of Kavanagh.

In one of his last public appearances, on RTE's The Late Late Show in December 2020, MacGowan joined John Sheehan, Finbar Furey, Lisa O'Neill and Glen Hansard in Kavanagh's On Raglan Road. Shane sang the last verse: "On a quiet street where old ghosts meet I see her walking now/ Away from me so hurriedly my reason must allow/That I have loved not as I should a creature made of clay/When the angel woos the clay he'd lose his wings at the dawn of day."

Like Kavanagh, MacGowan was an Irish Catholic with the soul of a mystic. The two poets had a sense of the timeless, and the ability to see the past in the present. Kavanagh was entranced by the words of the mid-19th century Irish Romantic poet, James Clarence Mangan. So was MacGowan. In her eulogy, Clarke told a story about coming home one day to the flat that she and Shane shared with Pogues roadie and minder Charlie Maclennan, only to be told that Shane had been in the toilet for three hours. "So I went banging on the door," Clarke told the congregation, "and he said: 'I'm talking to James Clarence Mangan, can you go away?'"

Mangan, an alcoholic and an opium addict, was the warning voice of the Famine, expressing Ireland's dreams and torments in beautiful laments like My Dark Rosaleen. After another two hours, MacGowan emerged with London You're A Lady. Destined for The Pogues' 1989 album *Peace And Love*, MacGowan would insist it had been dictated to him by the spirit of Mangan.

Although MacGowan was born in England, he spent the first six years of his life at his maternal grandmother's home in northwest Tipperary – and the music, dancing, singing and storytelling that went on in that Carney Commons farmhouse was the fire beneath his poetic imagination. It was there, under the guidance of his great aunts and uncles, that MacGowan read his first book, Dan Breen's My Fight For Irish Freedom, and started to write stories, poems and songs about Irish heroes such as Cú Chulainn.

"Irish poetry is an oral tradition carried by the people," Shane told me in 1987. "It doesn't come from intellectual thought, it comes from the connection between emotion and seeing and feeling. The English language tradition of Irish poetry isn't capable of transmitting the feeling, it just switches it into another language. I could go on about it for hours."

THE POET SEAMUS HEANEY once said: "Your Irishness constitutes a big unconscious voltage and all it needs is some transformer to make it current in a new and significant and renovative way."

For many of us in the '80s, hearing The Pogues for the first time was that transformer. At a time of political strife in Northern Ireland, IRA bombings in cities and towns across the UK and increasing anti-Irish racism, it was shocking to hear a band whose name was Gaelic for "kiss my arse" blasting out of daytime radio in the spring of 1984.

MacGowan had been a troubled teenager. At 13, he'd won a scholarship to the elite public school Westminster, but was expelled, for smoking cannabis, after one year. He'd later suffered a nervous breakdown and acute anxiety attacks, and agreed to a six-month detox at Bethlem Royal Hospital. At the first gig he went to on his release, he was to be unexpectedly liberated by punk.

"Going to see the Sex Pistols changed my life," he told me the night I first met him. "It changed loads of people's lives. There was a band that just got up there and made a really horrible noise and didn't give a fuck and who were all our age and had dyed hair and all that shit, and wore brothel creepers. And it was just a question of like, Yeah, fuck it, ➢

"going to see the sex pistols changed my life. it was like, yeah, fuck it, i hate everything, i might as well do that." shane macgowan

Looking for a kiss: The Pogues assemble in London, October 1984 (from left) Spider Stacy, Shane MacGowan, James Fearnley, Cait O'Riordan, Andrew Ranken, Jem Finer.

"He understood the essence of what made something matter"

Spider Stacy on Shane MacGowan: friend, bandmate, hero.

IT'S A STRANGE place to find myself, writing about my friend who has died, my friend without whom my life would have been utterly different.

And I honestly don't know what to write – so much has already been said, so many beautiful, heartfelt words from people who have lost someone dear to them, a brother, a lover… someone who was besides all else such a towering figure, a genius who could shape the hopes and fears, the sad, stained glory of the human condition into such extraordinary forms, as Andrew Ranken recently wrote, "Those brilliant, timeless, shining songs…"

Maybe that's the key. Shane, when I first got to know him, back in the dreaming turbulence of our early twenties, was always the coolest of us. He understood the essence of what made something matter, of what was real.

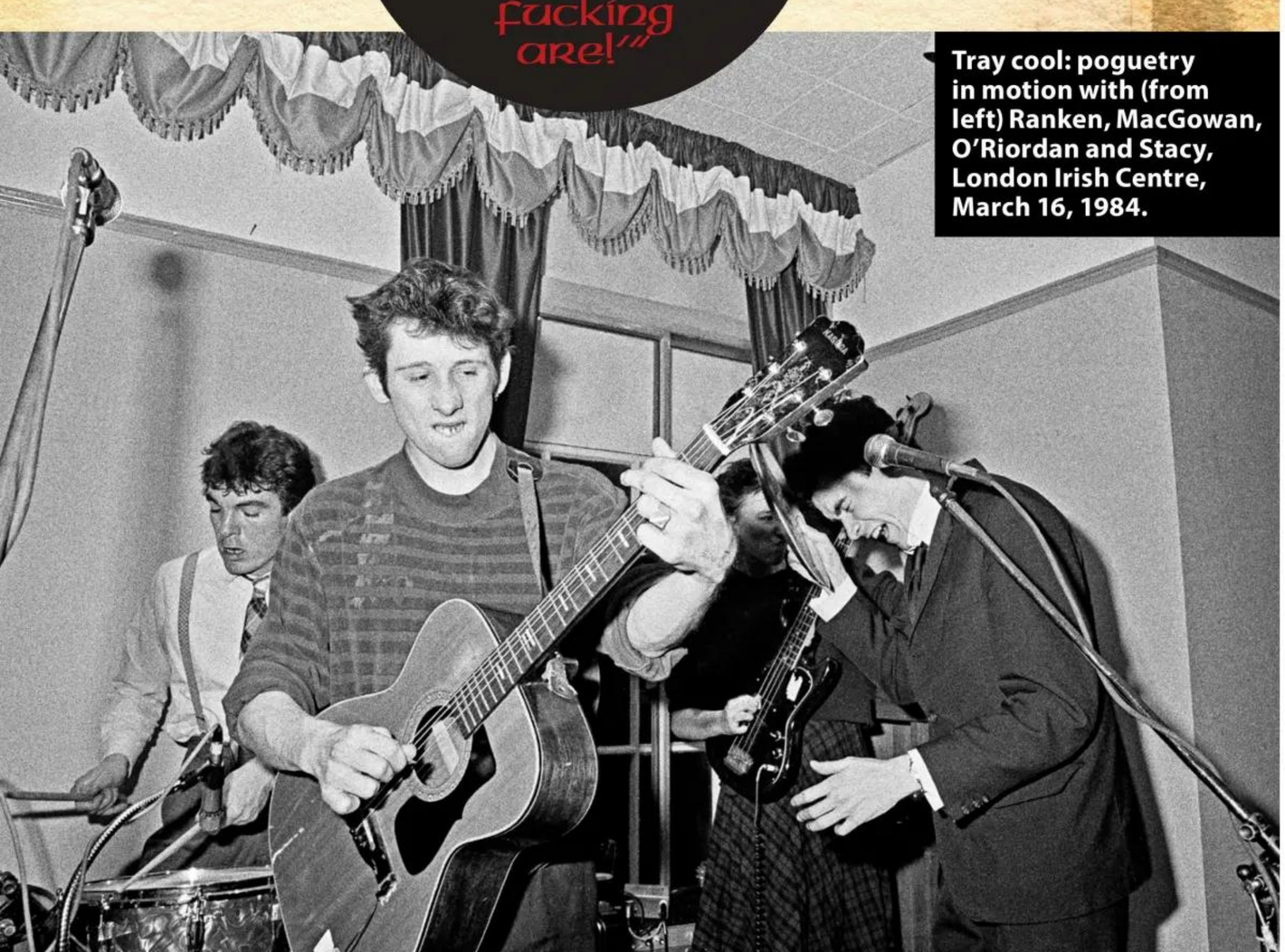
We first met at the Ramones at the Roundhouse, in April '77, in the gents toilet, Shane holding forth about fanzines. Later we exchanged our first words – "You enjoying yourself?" "Yeah." "Well that's what it's all about" – and went our separate ways.

Around the start of 1978, a bunch of my friends, including the other two members of my rudimentary punk trio the Millwall Chainsaws, moved to Burton Street in Bloomsbury, home to a diverse community of squatters, amongst whom were Shane, his long-term girlfriend Shanne Bradley and Jem Finer. The Chainsaws didn't have a guitarist, so Shane would sometimes sit in at rehearsals. Although it didn't happen until after Burton Street had been retaken by Camden Council, the first seeds of The Pogues were sown there, in the basements of the squatted Georgian terraces behind the ebb and flow of London on Southampton Row.

Shane moved to a one-bedroom flat on Cromer Street and our friendship grew deeper. We were already spending a lot of time together – I was always going to see The Nips and I'd regularly go and meet him at Rocks Off in Hanway Street, the record shop where he worked, and then go out drinking and snarling with a variety of recanting Orangemen, Clash roadies, Glitterbest aristocracy and other luminaries. It was one night around this time that Shane, along with Ollie Watts, the Chainsaws drummer, accosted Richard Strange at Cabaret Futura and told him that their new band, which played Irish rebel songs, would shortly be playing at his club, a ploy that worked. This led to an intense period of me sitting with Shane in Cromer Street night after night, drinking colossal quantities of cider, practising Deep Listening to the Irish Revolutionary songbook. The gig itself was something of a farce but an idea was taking shape. What had started with Shane sneering out a punk version of Poor Paddy On The Railway on a friend's acoustic guitar turned into something of a different order to anything we could have imagined.

Somewhere towards the end of our first tour I told Shane I thought we were the best band in the world. He scoffed. "Of course we fucking are!" Heroes live forever.

> "Towards the end of our first tour I told Shane I thought we were the best band in the world. He scoffed. 'Of course we fucking are!'"



Tray cool: poguetry in motion with (from left) Ranken, MacGowan, O'Riordan and Stacy, London Irish Centre, March 16, 1984.

I hate everything, I might as well do that."

MacGowan, redubbed Shane O'Hooligan, became one of the key faces on the punk scene. He formed a band with his girlfriend Shanne Bradley, which she named the Nipple Erectors – later The Nips – and hinted at his future flair for edgy romance when he penned Gabrielle. By the time The Nips dissolved at the end of 1980, MacGowan had been doing occasional gigs with the Millwall Chainsaws, a punk band fronted by Spider Stacy, a kindred spirit who shared his love of Irish folk firebrands The Dubliners.

In the spring of 1981, the Chainsaws renamed themselves The New Republicans and played a five-song set of Irish ballads and rebel songs at Richard Strange's Cabaret Futura in Soho. As it turned out, there was a group of off-duty soldiers in the audience, who pelted the band with beer cans and chips. "We were thinking of it as a one-off," MacGowan told me, "but we quickly realised that if it caused that many people to be upset, or to wonder what the fuck was going on, then it was worth continuing with."

Together with his neighbour Jem Finer, MacGowan began to carve a new musical direction. And so The Pogues – MacGowan (vocals), Finer (banjo), Stacy (tin whistle), James Fearnley (accordion), Cait O'Riordan (bass) and Andrew Ranken (drums) – were eventually born. Here, at last, was a band who combined the passion and anger of punk with the lyrical beauty and deep romanticism of traditional Irish ballads. And in MacGowan, the second generation-Irish now had a poetic and defiant voice of our own.

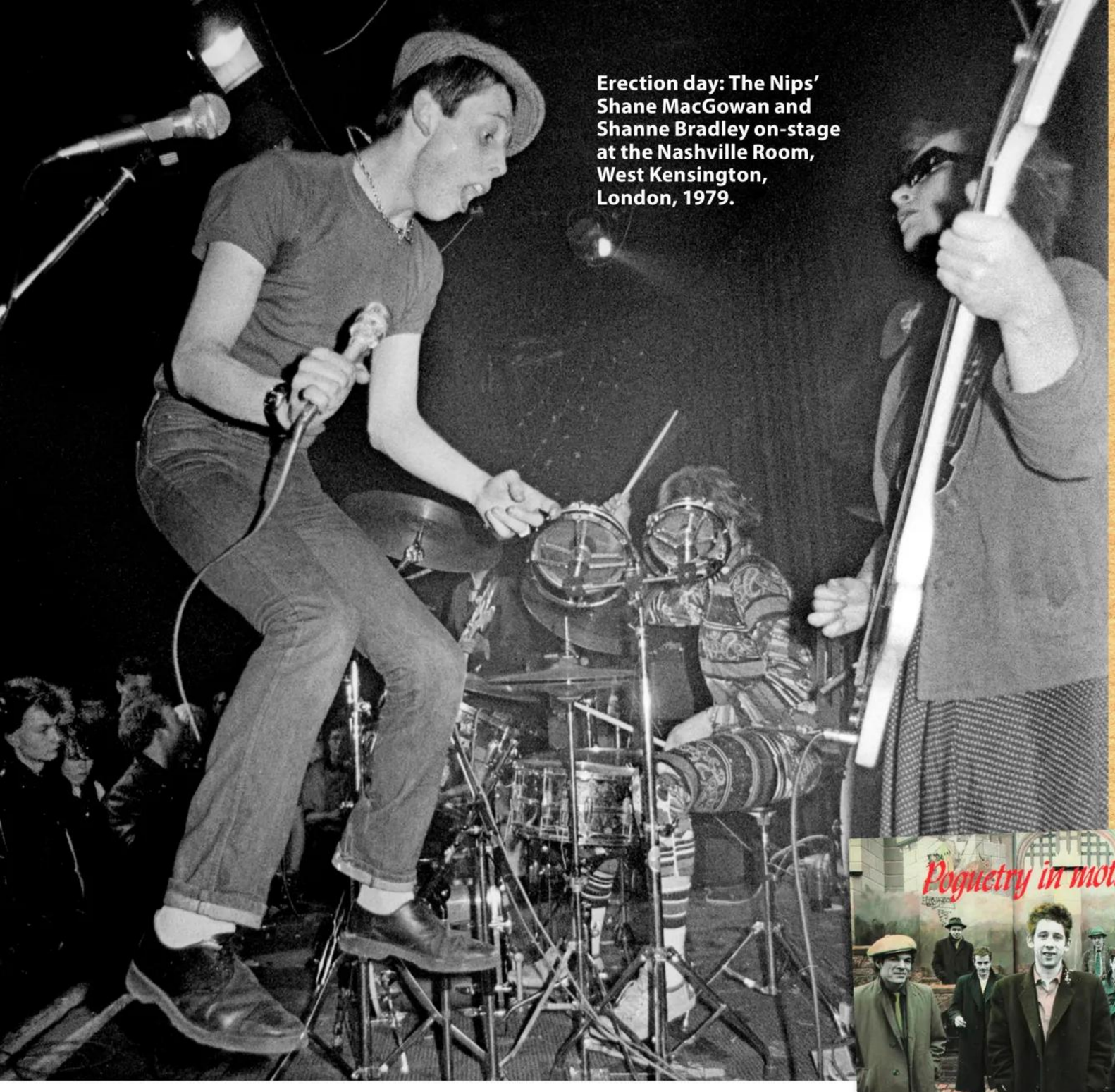
LIKE SHANE, I WAS BORN IN ENGLAND TO IRISH parents, who had emigrated from County Mayo and ran a pub in Lincolnshire. I started to write about music when I was a student in Leeds, and often did articles with my sister Mary, who was a photographer. In the summer of 1985, I interviewed The Wedding Present and their singer David Gedge lent me his vinyl copies of *Red Roses For Me* and *Rum, Sodomy And The Lash*. I listened over and over again to MacGowan's songs about dreaming and drinking, love and heartbreak, London and Ireland, mother and God. I loved the way he wrote about the changing of the seasons and that a pub or a greasy caff could suddenly be transformed into a place of poetic pilgrimage. As in Transmetropolitan, on *Red Roses For Me*: "From a five-bob bet in William Hills/To a Soho sex-shop dream/From a fried egg in Valtaro's/To a Tottenham Court Road ice cream…"

In October 1985, my sister and I got a train to Zurich to interview The Pogues for two pieces in ZigZag magazine, one on the band, and one on Shane, as part of a new year special on punk's Class Of '76 10 years on. This would be the first of many meetings and interviews with the band, as I quickly decided to write a biography (The Pogues: The Lost Decade), and formed a close friendship with Shane and Spider that endured over the following decades.

At the Rote Fabrik, my first impression of Shane – dressed in black with a long leather coat – was that he was funny and clever, and quite shy. He was a London punk, but he also belonged to the Irish countryside, and one of the first things he asked me was if I still went to Mass.

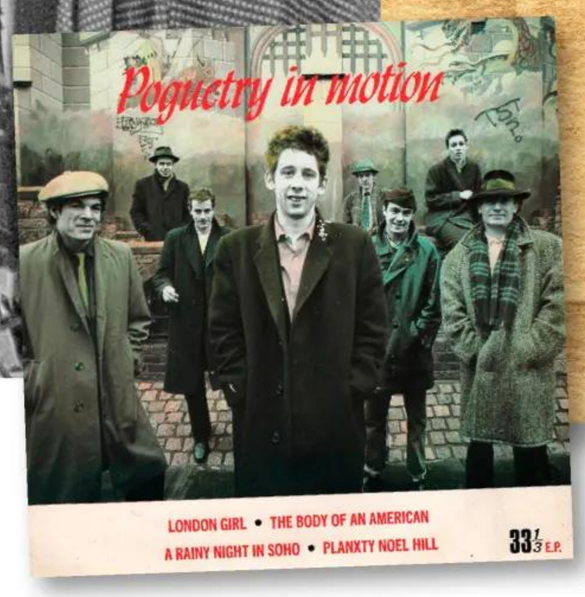
Back at the hotel after the gig, we talked about the night at the ICA in October 1976 that he got his ear 'bitten off' – an incident immortalised in the NME under the headline Cannibalism At Clash Gig with a photo of MacGowan and his assailant Jane Crockford (later of the Mo-dettes).

"I was up the front, and me and this girl were just having a bit of a laugh which involved, first off, biting each other's arms 'til they were completely covered in blood and then smashing up a couple of bottles and cutting each other up a bit," he said. "I haven't got a clue why the fuck I did it or why anybody did it, but that was how teenagers got their kicks in London in 1976 if they were hip."



Erection day: The Nips' Shane MacGowan and Shanne Bradley on-stage at the Nashville Room, West Kensington, London, 1979.

"I'm not interested in whether someone plays a bum note, as long as the audience scream and they mean it."
Shane MacGowan



Shane laughed his unmistakable laugh.

"And in the end she went a bit over the top and bottled me in the side of the head here, this ear actually (*points*) and then gallons of blood came out. It never got bitten off or nothing."

He took a deep drag on a freshly lit cigarette. "One thing that has got to be pointed out about the original punk scene," he added, "is that it was extremely elitist, like the Mod scene in the early '60s. Basically the whole thing was created by the beginning of 1977. If anybody got into it after that they were just a pile of shit."

A week after I met The Pogues in Zurich, and three hours before the band were due on-stage in Malmö, Shane was diagnosed with pneumonia. During a couple of precious free weeks, recuperating at his one-bedroom flat in King's Cross, he wrote what would become one of his greatest songs, A Rainy Night In Soho.

"I wrote that in one night," he told me later. "When you're out of your head and a song as finely honed and as lyrically polished as that comes out in the time it takes to write it, you know that something has helped you to do it."

I SAW THE POGUES AT THE MEAN FIDDLER IN Harlesden the following January – a gig that was being filmed for a special episode of French TV show Les Enfants Du Rock. The opening sequence began with a quote by Bob Dylan. "In the old days you paid the price to play rock'n'roll. You'd get run out of town or pushed over a cliff. Elvis, Little Richard, Chuck Berry… they all struck fear into the heart. It's all been neutralised – nothing threatening, nothing magical, nothing challenging."

Filmed also in The Devonshire Arms in Camden, and Elephant Studio in Wapping, where they were recording their Poguetry In Motion EP, the band proved themselves the antidote to Dylan's concern. Released on February 24, 1986, the EP would be in many ways their most perfect record. Four wildly varied tracks: London Girl, A Rainy Night In Soho, Body Of An American and Planxty Noel Hill – the latter a Jem Finer instrumental dedicated to an Irish concertina player who had recently described The Pogues as "a terrible abortion" of Irish music.

"Making Poguetry In Motion was the first time it really hit me what The Pogues could be," Sweeney's Men veteran Terry Woods – who'd joined the band in September 1985 – told me in 2004. "I'd never played Irish music from an emigrant's point of view, and it really hit me the way MacGowan saw Irish music. His emigrant's mind, his childhood memories of the people in Tipperary… and how it came out of him in a different sort of way."

Poguetry In Motion would act as a bridge from the folk-based sound of the first two albums to the orchestration that would characterise 1988's *If I Should Fall From Grace With God*. During that two-year period, The Pogues were constantly on the road and developed into one of the most exciting live bands in the world.

"The only thing that could ever go wrong was an audience that wasn't interested and that hardly ever happened," Shane told me. "I'm not interested in what critics say, I'm not interested in whether someone plays a bum note, as long as the audience scream and they mean it and they have a good time."

The Pogues were electric company. They had great taste in music, film and literature – Tom Waits's *Rain Dogs* and Sergio Leone's Once Upon A Time In America were on constant rotation on their tour bus. Spider and Shane were a razor-witted double act, generally acting out scenes from their favourite westerns and gangster movies, or simply doubled over with helpless laughter.

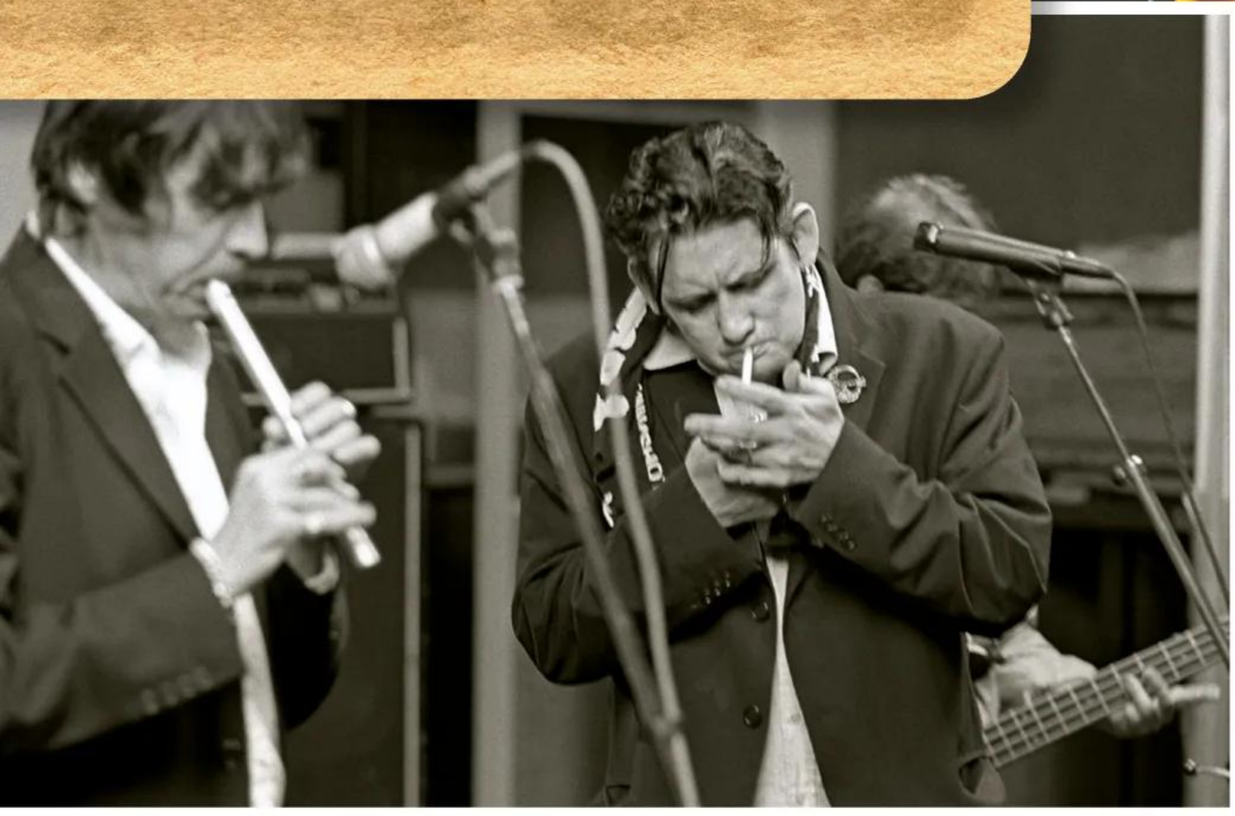
"If Shane hadn't met Spider, The Pogues wouldn't have happened," Philip Chevron – an early champion of the band who had joined them as a temporary replacement for Jem Finer in April 1985 and never left – later reflected. "He needed that foil to give him the confidence to say: 'Look, you can actually do this.' And equally with Jem. It was all of those elements, and that just happens once in a lifetime. The stars are all lined up in the right way. It's also more or less a guarantee that it will implode quite quickly because anything that perfect is not destined to last very long."

The Pogues reached their peak in 1988, in the wake of the Christmas '87 success of Fairytale Of New York, and the live shows that followed. After that, the constant touring started to take its toll on MacGowan. When Dylan invited The Pogues to open his Californian shows in September 1989, MacGowan failed to show up. By the time the band recorded their fifth album, *Hell's Ditch* in 1990, it was obvious that he no longer wanted to be in the band. Things came to a head in September 1991 when MacGowan fell out of the back of the tour van in Japan. Concerned for his health, the band called a meeting and the task of letting him go fell to bassist ➢

Camera Press/Paul Slattery, Ray Stevenson

"If Shane hadn't met Spider, the Pogues wouldn't have happened. He needed that foil to give him the confidence."

Philip Chevron



Hell raisers: (above) The Pogues at the Barrowland Ballroom, Glasgow, October 1990 (clockwise from top left) Ranken, Finer, Philip Chevron, Terry Woods, MacGowan, Fearnley, Stacy, Daryl Hunt; (left) friends reunited: Spider and Shane freshen their glasses at RAK Studios, St John's Wood, London, October 12, 2005.

◄ Darryl Hunt. "What took you so long?" he responded.

MacGowan went on to form a new band, The Popes, and both Stacy and Finer played on their first album, 1994's *The Snake*. The Pogues eventually re-formed for a Christmas tour in 2001 and continued to gig until 2013 – the year of Philip Chevron's death, aged 56. The band last performed together in 2014, by which time Shane had decided that he didn't want to tour any more. The following year, he fell as he was leaving a Dublin recording studio, where he had been working with the Irish band Cronin, and broke his pelvis. He carried on recording new material with the band over the next few years, and a 15-track album, which includes guest appearances from Spider and Jem, will be released at some point.

Some people consider MacGowan's lack of productivity in recent years a source of regret. But he wrote so many great songs in a short space of time, and how many songwriters can say that? "I truly believe that 100 years from now most of us will be forgotten," Bruce Springsteen said in 2020, "but Shane's music is going to be remembered and sung. He's the master for me, and I have a deep appreciation of his work and the work he did with The Pogues."

DURING THE POGUETRY IN MOTION SESSIONS, The Pogues recorded a cover of The Lovin' Spoonful's Do You Believe In Magic?. It was meant to be released with a Christmas ballad by Shane and Jem, though it would take another 18 months, and some stardust of its own, for Fairytale Of New York to be fully realised.

But Shane MacGowan *did* believe in magic. He saw it flowing through the music that besotted him. From his childhood hero Jimi Hendrix to Sam Cooke and Smokey Robinson to Turlough O'Carolan, Seán O'Riada, Seán O'Sé, The Dubliners, The Fureys, Christy Moore, Planxty, Sweeney's Men, Maggie Barry, Joe Dolan, Johnny McEvoy, Big Tom & The Mainliners, Thin Lizzy, Van Morrison and The Undertones. "There is something about Irish music," he often said. "It hits you in the heart and the gut. It's got soul."

Just as Shane was a conduit for past generations of Irish singers and their songs, he dreamed of passing that mantle on. Some years ago he talked to me about establishing a regular happening called Hip Eire, and exposing new Irish voices who understood his vision. Fontaines D.C., Lankum, Lisa O'Neill, John Francis Flynn and The Mary Wallopers are all links in that mysterious chain.

During her eulogy, Siobhan MacGowan said that although he was born in Kent, her brother's "veins ran deep with Irish blood" and he had "absorbed the magical mayhem" of his mother's childhood home.

Addressing President Michael D Higgins, Siobhan referenced the night of Shane's 60th birthday celebration, held at Dublin's National Concert Hall, when he was presented with a lifetime achievement award for his outstanding contribution to Irish life, music and culture.

"That love and devotion to Tipperary and Ireland gave birth to a dream," Siobhan said. "He dreamed of one day being the teller of stories, the singer of the songs. He dreamed of following in the footsteps of those great Irish lyricists and musicians he so admired. He dreamed of continuing this proud tradition. He dreamed that one day he might add his name to those who'd gone before him. And so when the President put that award in his hands he knew that he had achieved that dream."

I was there that night in Dublin, and I remember thinking that I had never been in a room filled with so much love for one man or woman. And then there came that rainy December day in Nenagh.

Dream on, Shane, dream on. Ⓜ

Bleddyn Butcher (2)

tender hooligan

20 great songs written and/or sung by Shane MacGowan.

Gabrielle

(The Nips single, Soho/Chiswick, 1979)

Summer-of-'76 ace face 'Shane O'Hooligan' was hardly seen as a songwriterly prospect, until November 1979 when his band The Nips (nés Nipple Erectors) served up this well-constructed slice of reincarnated '50s rock'n'roll. Its transmission of central London's buzz is offset against Shane's baleful yearning for the titular ex. In the mid-2010s, the song's publishers were reputedly touting Gabrielle for inclusion in Pop Idol. *AP*

Transmetropolitan

(from Red Roses For Me, Stiff, 1984)

First track on their debut LP, Transmetropolitan was The Pogues' mission statement. Sulphate-paced accordions and violins ride a tubthumping punk-folk groove as pie-eyed piper MacGowan machine guns not-quite expletives, leading his down-at-heel troops through a riotous London junket. Gloriously unrefined to its last defiant cry of "I ain't going home tonight!" *AC*

Dark Streets of London

(from Red Roses For Me, Stiff, 1984)

Scrapping Ralph McTell-style sentiment, MacGowan maps the purgatory of poverty on The Pogues' full-pelt debut single. Denied the warmth of Hammersmith's pubs and bookies, he's instead chilled by memories of "the place where they gave ECT". Yet heart-breaking nihilism is undercut by the song's animal heat, an unextinguishable blaze in the dark. *VS*

Boys From the County Hell

(from Red Roses For Me, Stiff, 1984)

Often dismissed as a mere drinking song, this rip-roaring Dubliners-esque romp was darkness itself. Set against a bleak, rainy backdrop, it's an unsettling celebration of ultraviolent retribution narrated by the amoral son of a blueshirt (Ireland's fascist party) whose brother participated in My Lai. *JA*

The Sick Bed of Cúchulainn

(from Rum, Sodomy & The Lash, Stiff, 1985)

The roistering life given mythical heft, as MacGowan takes the Irish warrior demi-god of the title carousing through time and space. Heroic battles are fought against blackshirts; Irish Republican heroes are encountered during the Spanish Civil War; drink flows, relentlessly. Written in 1985, it proved a manifesto for MacGowan's next 37 years, a quest to challenge the limits of apparent indestructability. *JM*

The Old Main Drag

(from Rum, Sodomy & The Lash, Stiff, 1985)

A ruined life crunched into three minutes, this pitiless tale of Piccadilly rent boys and police brutality expresses a very physical humanity: alleyway sex, bloody violence, slow death. What startles beyond the Tuinal-spiked narrative, though, is how MacGowan suddenly stops singing, delivering his last words with a trapdoor snap. No consolation, no hope. *VS*

A Pair of Brown Eyes

(from Rum, Sodomy & The Lash, Stiff, 1985)

Broken-hearted and drunk, our hero is cornered by an old soldier inflicting his tale of still greater loss when, invalided home, he finds no pair of brown eyes awaiting him – anecdotally not a sweetheart's but his dog's. Framing its vivid narrative weave, the poignant tune derives from Francis McPeake's Wild Mountain Thyme. *MS*

Sally MacLennane

(from Rum, Sodomy & The Lash, Stiff, 1985)

This rollicking jig was inspired by Shane's uncle's pub in Dagenham, which served Sally MacLennane stout to Ford workers. With its twisted tale of prodigal Jimmy croaking on his pint, the track became an indie disco staple, coaxing student revellers to dance to punk'd Irish traditional music, and thereafter delve into the deep, dark world of MacGowan. *AP*

A Rainy Night in Soho

(from Poguetry In Motion EP, Stiff, 1986)

One of MacGowan's great London songs, but the location isn't as important as the deeper message of enduring love and the consolations of the uncanny – a romance that leans into the word's original supernatural connotations. The singer considers his place in the great scheme of things with tender fortitude: "I'm not talking of the first time/I never think about the last." *JM*

The Body of an American

(from Poguetry In Motion EP, Stiff, 1986)

MacGowan at his most adventurous, mixing the poetic stage-Irish of Seán O'Casey with the Baroque melodicism of Turlough O'Carolan. Musically, it's constructed for the parlour, a funereal waltz leading to a celebratory drunken chorus, but the narrative – centred around the wake of an Irish American boxer – is elusive. A song that simultaneously resists analysis yet demands it. *AM*

Fairytale of New York

(single, Pogue Mahone, 1987)

Not many can boast to have written a genuine standard, let alone a seasonal one. Shane and Jem Finer's bid for immortality works across time and generations, its rejection of sentimental baubles for a fierce balance of defiance and decay its true wonder. Finer credited Shane for the song's Broadway melody; Kirsty MacColl is the perfect foil. *DE*

If I Should Fall From Grace With God

(from If I Should Fall From Grace With God, Pogue Mahone, 1988)

Later, MacGowan would regret the sophistication that came with the addition of Philip Chevron (guitar) and Terry Woods (mandolin etc), but who can deny the epic woosh and seamless instrumental mesh of this relentless snarl in the face of death, and maybe even damnation? Let him go, boys. Let him go. *DE*

Thousands are Sailing

(from If I Should Fall From Grace With God, Pogue Mahone, 1988)

Like Horslips and U2, The Pogues were haunted by the Irish diaspora, its voyage "across the Western Ocean/To a land of opportunity" never more rousingly dramatised than by Thousands…'s writer, former Radiator From Space Philip Chevron. Though no Luke Kelly, lead voice MacGowan utterly owns his bandmate's poetic panorama. *MS*

Lullaby of London

(from If I Should Fall From Grace With God, Pogue Mahone, 1988)

Even in The Nips, MacGowan was London-Irish rather than merely Irish. Lullaby Of London isn't an overt ode to MacGowan's city – London is never mentioned – but it couldn't be set anywhere else. It is, though, unquestionably a lullaby, a sibling for Forever Young, a prayer for the child MacGowan would never sire. *JA*

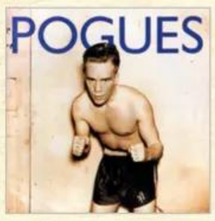
The Broad Majestic Shannon

(from If I Should Fall From Grace With God, Pogue Mahone, 1988)

This hymn to Ireland's great river offered classic MacGowan elements: musicians playing old Irish airs, birds singing, booze, existential sorrow. Yet here the place names along the Shannon lend the song an epic, watery sweep, while the "rusty tin can" and "old hurley ball" possess an intangible Rosebud significance. Not just about a river, but the melancholy flow of life itself. *PG*

White City

(from Peace And Love, Pogue Mahone, 1989)



Originally intended by MacGowan as an acid house rave-up, then reworked into a Trad Arr salute to the once grand West London dog-track (demolished in 1985) this galloping jig is also a valedictory lament for the loss of a working-class Atlantis and its heady culture of "speed, skill and schemes". *AM*

Summer in Siam

(single, Pogue Mahone, 1990)

Conceived as a four-line miniature with just vocals and rippling light-on-water piano, Summer In Siam is the sound of MacGowan reaching for a state of Zen-like peace. As such, the finished version, with additional harp glissandos and strings, has a bittersweet unease, MacGowan's lyrical purity chivvied into a more conventional state of romantic bliss. *AM*

The Church of the Holy Spook

(from Shane MacGowan And The Popes' The Snake, ZTT, 1994)

A banjo-driven testament of mum-was-a-saint guilt and good-old-ways redemption, like I Fought The Law and White Lightning reverse-engineered into London-Irish country pub-punk. It's also charged with Catholicism and Buddhism, and the claim that "rock'n'roll you crucified me" is no joke. His first post-Pogues chart entry, it boded so well. *IH*

Haunted

(Shane MacGowan And Sinéad O'Connor single, ZTT, 1995)

This re-recorded Pogues song (the original's on the OST of Alex Cox's 1986 Sid And Nancy movie) is a golden imagining of punk's sacrificial couple simply being young and in love. Sinéad sounds beatific, Shane's as vulnerable as he ever got, and then love conquers death. No need to remember that it appeared in a Sandra Bullock art-heist rom-com. *IH*

Rock'n'Roll Paddy

(from Shane MacGowan And The Popes' The Crock Of Gold, ZTT, 1997)

His mojo all but spent, MacGowan unexpectedly rediscovers the lunatic, vengeful inner-Shane of Boys From The County Hell et al. As a Tex-Mex backing bops jauntily along, punctuated with a stolen Eddie Cochran riff, he threatens crime and violence, glorying for the last time in his low-life Pogues anima. Dark, brilliant fun. *PG*

Kiss their arses: John Aizlewood, Andy Cowan, Danny Eccleston, Pat Gilbert, Ian Harrison, Andrew Male, John Mulvey, Andrew Perry, Victoria Segal, Mat Snow

MOJO EYEWITNESS

THE SHADOWS STEP OUT

Into the light: The Shadows get switched on, 1963 (from left) Bruce Welch, Hank Marvin, Brian Bennett, John Rostill; (left) 1960 hit Apache.

Forged in skiffle, they found fame with Cliff Richard and became lords of instrumental rock when Apache was a smash in 1960. For years success on the charts, stage and screen made them cornerstones of British rock, with bespectacled lead player Hank Marvin an inspiration to a million bedroom guitarists. Then The Beatles happened. "Music was changing," recall the band and admirers, adding, "we provided a template for the British group boom…"

Interviews by **LOIS WILSON**

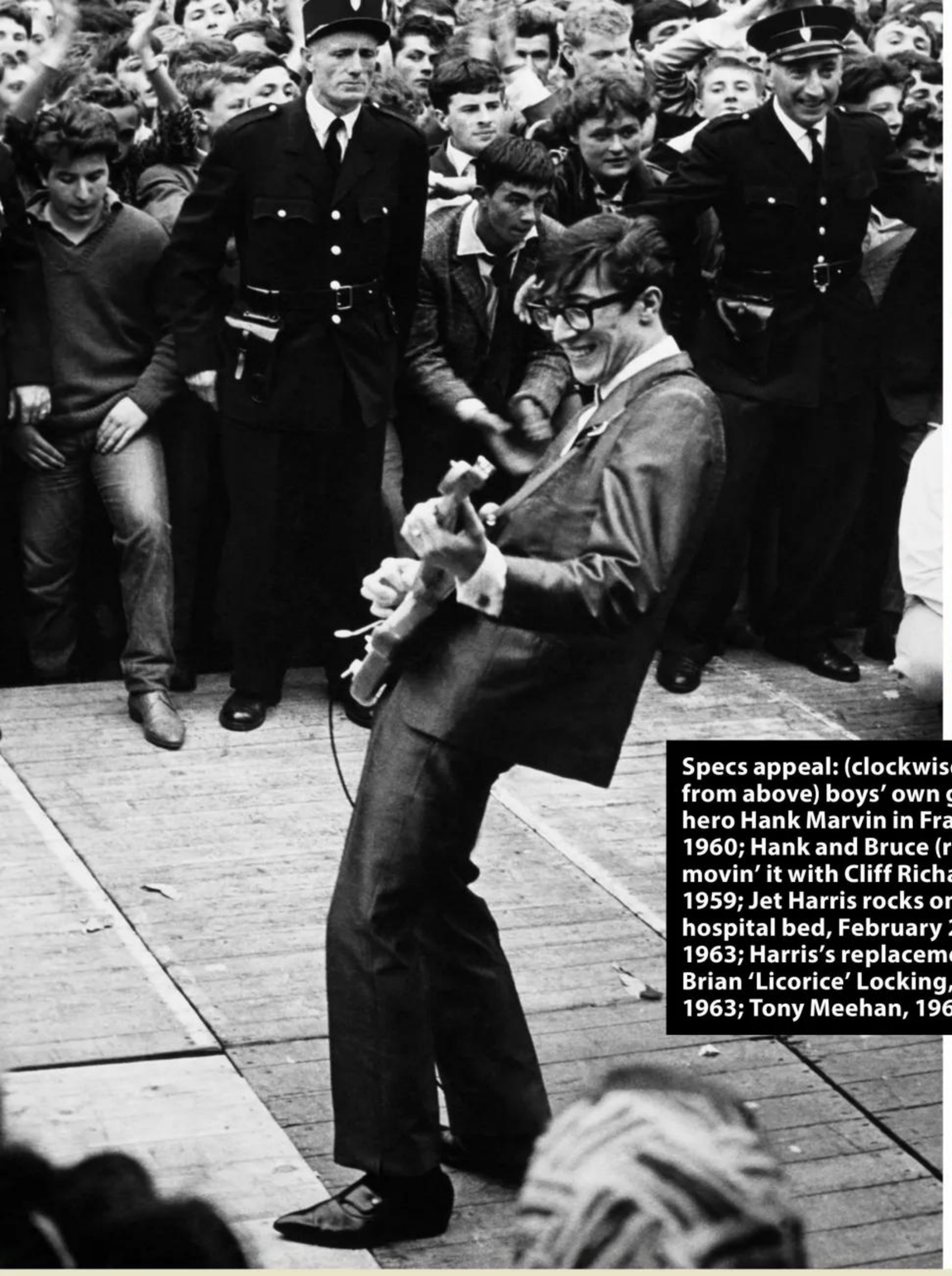
Popperfoto/Getty Images

Bruce Welch: Lonnie Donegan arrived in 1956 and he said, "Anyone can do this music, all you need is a couple of guitars, a string bass and a washboard." Hank and I were 14 and like so many others, we started our own skiffle groups.

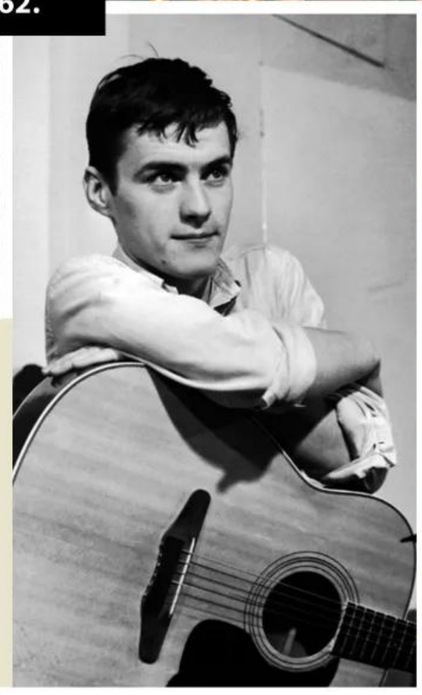
Hank Marvin: Bruce and I were at [Rutherford Grammar] school in Newcastle. He brought in his steel bodied guitar and we started talking. I was in the Crescent City Skiffle Group. We played youth clubs for a cup of tea and a biscuit. Bruce was in The Railroaders. They got paid for their shows and he invited me to join them.

BW: The Railroaders played in a talent contest at the Regal in Edmonton, this would have been April 1958. We didn't win – came third – but me and Hank stayed on in London. We'd read how Tommy Steele was discovered at [Soho coffee bar and Brit-rock ground zero] the 2i's and we headed there.

Brian Bennett: The 2i's was this tiny coffee bar on Old Compton Street with a cellar. I was the in-house drummer



Specs appeal: (clockwise from above) boys' own guitar hero Hank Marvin in France, 1960; Hank and Bruce (right) movin' it with Cliff Richard, 1959; Jet Harris rocks on in a hospital bed, February 25, 1963; Harris's replacement Brian 'Licorice' Locking, 1963; Tony Meehan, 1962.



"AT GIGS THE FIRST 10 ROWS WOULD BE GUYS LOOKING LIKE HANK..."

Bruce Welch

◄ and Hank and Bruce got up on stage and played. They sang at this time, they liked The Everly Brothers.

BW: The 2i's quickly became home and everyone I was subsequently in a band with started there, Tony Meehan, Jet Harris, Brian Bennett, Brian 'Licorice' Locking, Cliff. I was serving orange juice there when Cliff played.

Cliff Richard: It was all very hot and steamy and the audience just loved everything we did. All we had to do was sing anything that was a hit by Elvis or Jerry Lee Lewis or Buddy Holly or The Everly Brothers or Little Richard.

Marty Wilde: Jack Goode played me [October '58 Number 2 hit] Move It! by Cliff Richard And The Drifters. I thought it was American. No one played rock'n'roll like that in the UK.

HM: John Foster, Cliff's manager, came to the 2i's looking for Tony Sheridan to ask him to play lead guitar on Cliff's upcoming tour in October. I was talking to Rick Richards, a country and western singer, and he said, "Why do you want Tony? You should hear Hank instead!" I was embarrassed but played some rock'n'roll numbers and John gave me the job. I said, Do you need a rhythm guitarist? He said yes so Bruce came along too.

BW: We went round the corner and up a flight of stairs into a tailor's shop and there was Cliff getting fitted in his pink jacket. We went to his house [in Cheshunt] and we jammed all afternoon and we found ourselves in The Drifters alongside [drummer] Terry Smart and [bassist] Ian Samwell, who were Cliff's school friends. We all travelled on the same bus on tour, all the acts on the bill, The Kalin Twins, Eddie Calvert. It was a squeeze. And the tour was riotous.

CR: It was wonderful being screamed at and torn at and the girls tearing their hair and bursting into tears… and the chaps hated me but they came to see Hank – this guy who looked like Buddy Holly and played like James Burton – so we had it both ways.

BW: By the end of the tour Ian and Terry had left to be replaced by [bassist] Jet Harris and [drummer] Tony Meehan. Cliff kept badgering his producer Norrie Paramor to give us our own EMI contract. When he did, we made a single and tried to release it in America and got an injunction from the black vocal group The Drifters.

Jet Harris: Me and Hank had Lambrettas and we were out in Ruislip. We were outside the Six Bells pub drinking Guinness, which we probably shouldn't have been. After about an hour of talking about names, I said, How about Cliff Richard And The Shadows? Hank's eyes lit up. We'd been through everything: The Tsetse Flies, The Zodiacs, The Zephyrs…

Joe Brown: I knew the guys, we'd come in at ground level together. I'd bought a Watkins Copicat echo unit, I didn't like it, didn't think I had any use for it and I gave it to Hank.

HM: We did three singles, two vocals, one instrumental [1959's Feelin' Fine, Jet Black and Lonesome Fella] and none of them hit. Then we did another UK tour with Cliff, and Jerry Lordan was the support. He played me and Jet this song on his ukulele, it was so different, and he said did we want it? Initially Norrie said it should be the B-side, but he played it to his daughters and they loved it, and he said "I think you've got a hit". That was Apache.

BW: We recorded it in June at Abbey Road, Cliff played a Chinese drum he found in the studio on the intro and outro and then it went to Number 1 [in August 1960] knocking off Cliff's Please Don't Tease, which I'd co-written and The Shadows had played on.

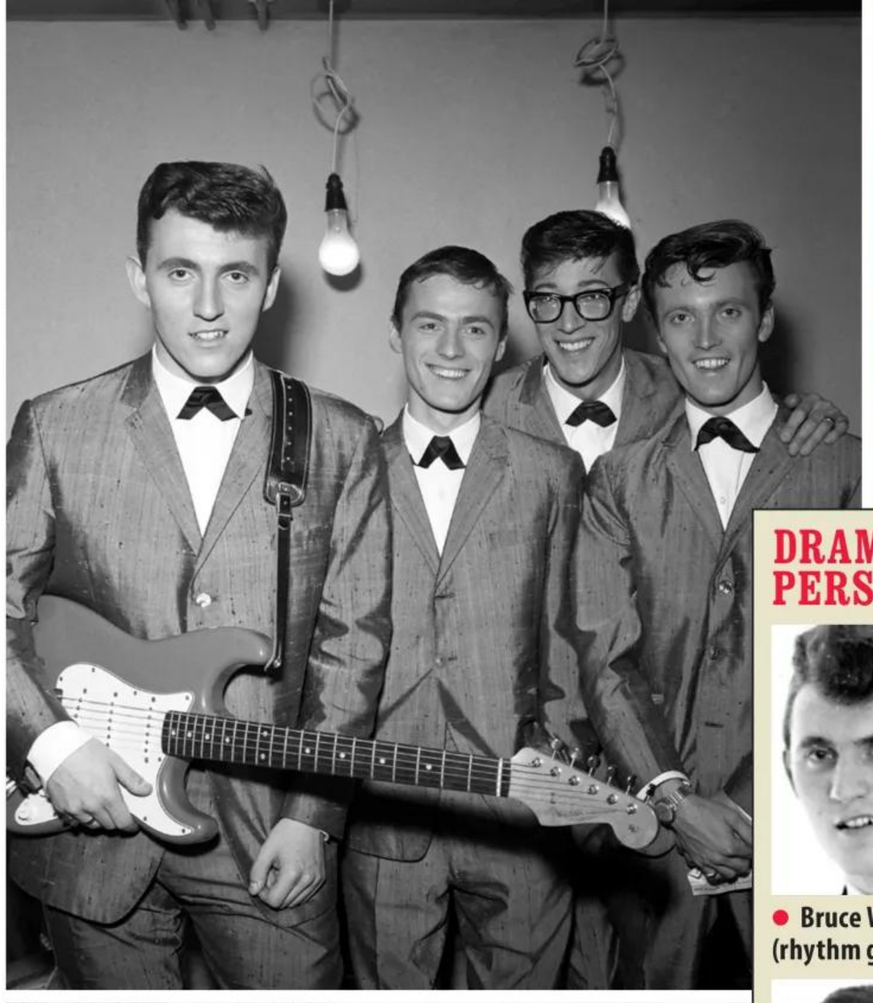
MW: Apache became the model for British rock, and Hank became a guitar hero, that sound he got, the twang, the tremolo, the echo unit – it was totally unique and so clean sounding.

BW: We'd play gigs and look out at the audience and the first 10 rows would be guys looking like Hank, all wearing glasses whether they needed to or not, and all staring at Hank's fingers, seeing what he was playing. After Apache we introduced what became known as 'The Shadows' Walk'. We'd seen The Treniers supporting Jerry Lee Lewis back in '58 and they'd all moved in unison when they played, holding their instruments up and then to the side, and that inspired us.

Colin Howell: I was 15, heard Apache, made a copy of Hank's Strat, taught myself to play and went to see them at Birmingham in 1960. It was my first live gig and when they did Apache everyone went wild. I missed school because of it and got detention and 300 lines. It was worth it. There was no one like them.

BW: And then it was hit after hit after hit: Man Of Mystery, FBI, The Frightened City, Kon-Tiki, The Savage, Wonderful Land. And it was worldwide. We went to South Africa in March '61. There were thousands of kids waiting for us at the airport, and then all along the drive to the hotel and outside the hotel in Johannesburg it was heaving. It was the first time we came across apartheid. We felt really uncomfortable and we went into Soweto, into the

Getty (6), Popperfoto/Getty (3)



township to play, which was amazing.

HM: We left Tony in South Africa with his return ticket. He wouldn't get out of bed to catch the flight home. He was always late and it started to cause problems. We ended up doing some shows without him as he'd not turned up on time. He had a bad attitude, was arrogant and in the end he left [in October 1961].

BB: I was about to start work with Anthony Newley on [West End musical] Stop The World – I Want To Get Off when The Shadows called and asked if I'd join. I wasn't sure, I'd done my time in bands, so they asked how much I was getting paid and when I said £25, they said they'd double it. £50 was a fortune in 1961, and the next day I made my way to Blackpool and we rehearsed for an hour in the dressing room before we went on-stage. There was great chemistry.

HM: We weren't actors by any stretch of the imagination but the films we got to do with Cliff [from '61 to '66, these were The Young Ones, Summer Holiday, Wonderful Life and Finders Keepers] raised our profile enormously and were our way into writing film music.

BW: But the more success we got, the more Jet drank. He'd go to the pub and there would be six people around him going, "Have a drink, have a drink, have a drink," and his playing got affected. We didn't want anything to spoil the band. We'd come such a long way.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

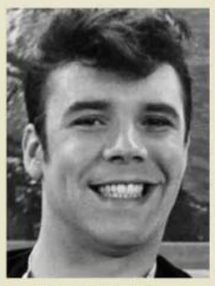
● **Bruce Welch (rhythm guitar)**

● **Hank Marvin (lead guitar)**

● **Brian Bennett (drums)**

● **Cliff Richard (erstwhile vocalist)**

● **Jet Harris (bass)**



● **Marty Wilde (singer, peer)**

● **Joe Brown (singer, peer)**

● **Colin 'Shakey' Howell (superfan, founder of Surrey Blues Club)**

Didn't they do well: (above) The Shadows join Cliff Richard to celebrate 1 million sales of Congratulations, 1968; (left, from top) Welch, Meehan, Marvin and Harris, 1960; Cliff shares the Shads' joy as Apache hits Number 1, 1960.

JH: I made up my mind and announced I was leaving, and that was it. I had an alcohol problem.

HM: Then Jet and Tony got together and did Diamonds [a Number 1 in January 1963] which was fantastic.

BB: I told them to get in Brian Locking to replace Jet on bass. We'd been in Marty Wilde's band together and he was a fantastic player.

HM: We later found out he was studying with the Jehovah's Witnesses when he joined and he wasn't with us long, leaving to become what they call a pioneer, a full-time minister [Hank also became a Jehovah's Witness in 1973]. Then we got in John Rostill. We did the NME Poll-Winners concert [in April '64] with The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Searchers and it was great, but it was obvious that music was changing from the bill.

MW: Music always moves on and things go in and out of fashion, but there would be no Beatles without The Shadows!

BB: We ended 1964 in panto, Aladdin at the Palladium. I got pushed through a mangle by Arthur Askey twice a day. I hadn't signed up for that. Later we played the working men's clubs, horrible places. Some guy would get up and say, "Here we are then. They're not my cup of tea but I hope you like them – The Shadows." That would be our introduction.

HM: The creativity and energy of the band was dissipating. People just wanted the hits, and all that drive we had evaporated.

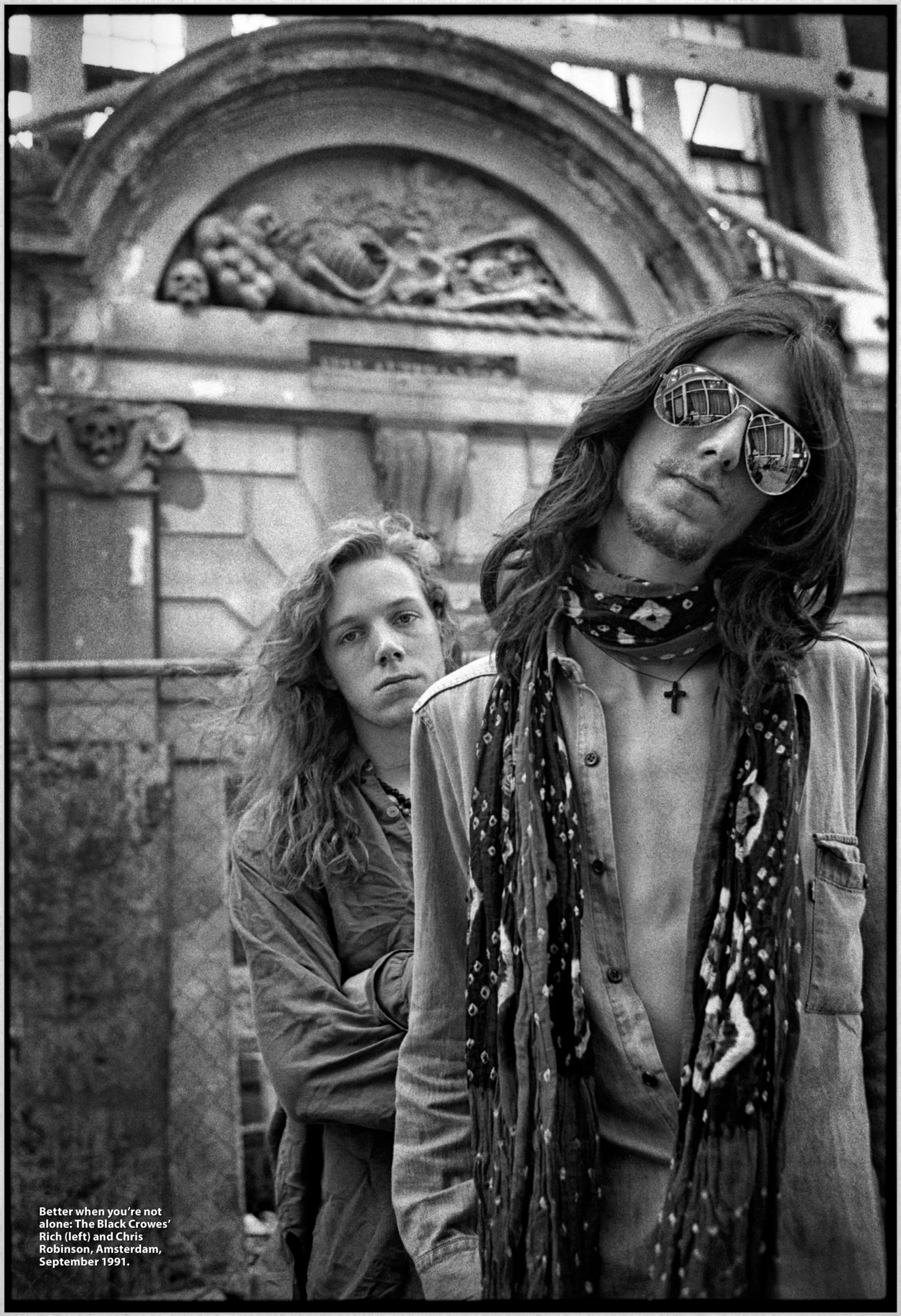
BW: Put any four or five guys together, they're living together, travelling together, working together non-stop for 10 years and there are going to be problems. I was temperamental, depressed. I was going out with Olivia Newton-John and I just wanted to spend more time with her. I gave notice on the band. We did our last gig at the Palladium on December 14, 1968, and they gave me a lovely gold clock as a leaving present.

BB: We'd had a good run and went our separate ways, there was no bad feeling. Then in 1975 we got asked to re-form for Eurovision. We hadn't played together since the split so we thought we'd better do a few shows to see if we could still do it. The first one, at Fairfield Halls in Croydon, was overwhelming. We walked on and the audience stood up and applauded for five minutes. There was so much affection for us.

HM: EMI put out [1977's] *20 Golden Greats* collection and we thought they were nuts. We said to them, "Who is going to buy it?" But it was a huge success and we were back – we had hits with [1978's] Don't Cry For Me Argentina and [1979's Theme From The Deer Hunter] Cavatina, we did Wembley in 1989 to celebrate 30 years, we did the farewell concerts in 2009 and we're all still playing today [the group last played together in 2020].

BW: So many guitarists say they were inspired by us – Brian May, Pete Townshend. We provided a template for the British group boom. It's incredibly satisfying to know that.

Jet Harris interviewed in 2009, courtesy Kieron Tyler. Cliff Richard quotes from Tom Hibbert in Q, 1987.



Better when you're not alone: The Black Crowes' Rich (left) and Chris Robinson, Amsterdam, September 1991.

Sometimes Salvation

As famed for their stormy sibling rivalry as for their soulful rock extrapolations, The Black Crowes seemed dead and buried, the grave trampled by wronged and resentful ex-members. But now the brothers Robinson are back, with a new album and – they claim – a new attitude. "In order to do this properly, we had to not be dicks," they tell Mark Blake.

Photograph by Tom Sheehan

PHIL LYNOTT POINTS HIS BASS GUITAR LIKE A MACHINE gun at Chris Robinson's head. The framed photograph of Thin Lizzy's main man in attack mode hangs on a wall in the vocalist's house in Marin County, California. "And I also have Darby Crash right here," says Robinson, showing MOJO a picture of the Germs' doomed singer.

The Rolling Stones' signature tongue appears in the crook of Robinson's elbow as he pulls up his sleeve to reveal the "pot-head pixie" from Gong's *Flying Teapot* album cover. "A memento of the psychedelic world we were living in," he offers, with a lopsided grin.

The photographs and body art are testament to Chris Robinson's fascination with rock'n'roll in all its forms. A few days earlier, he took the plunge and saw Depeche Mode at the LA Forum: "I never listened to them in the '80s, because I was so obsessed with guitar music. But it was one of the best fucking shows I've ever seen."

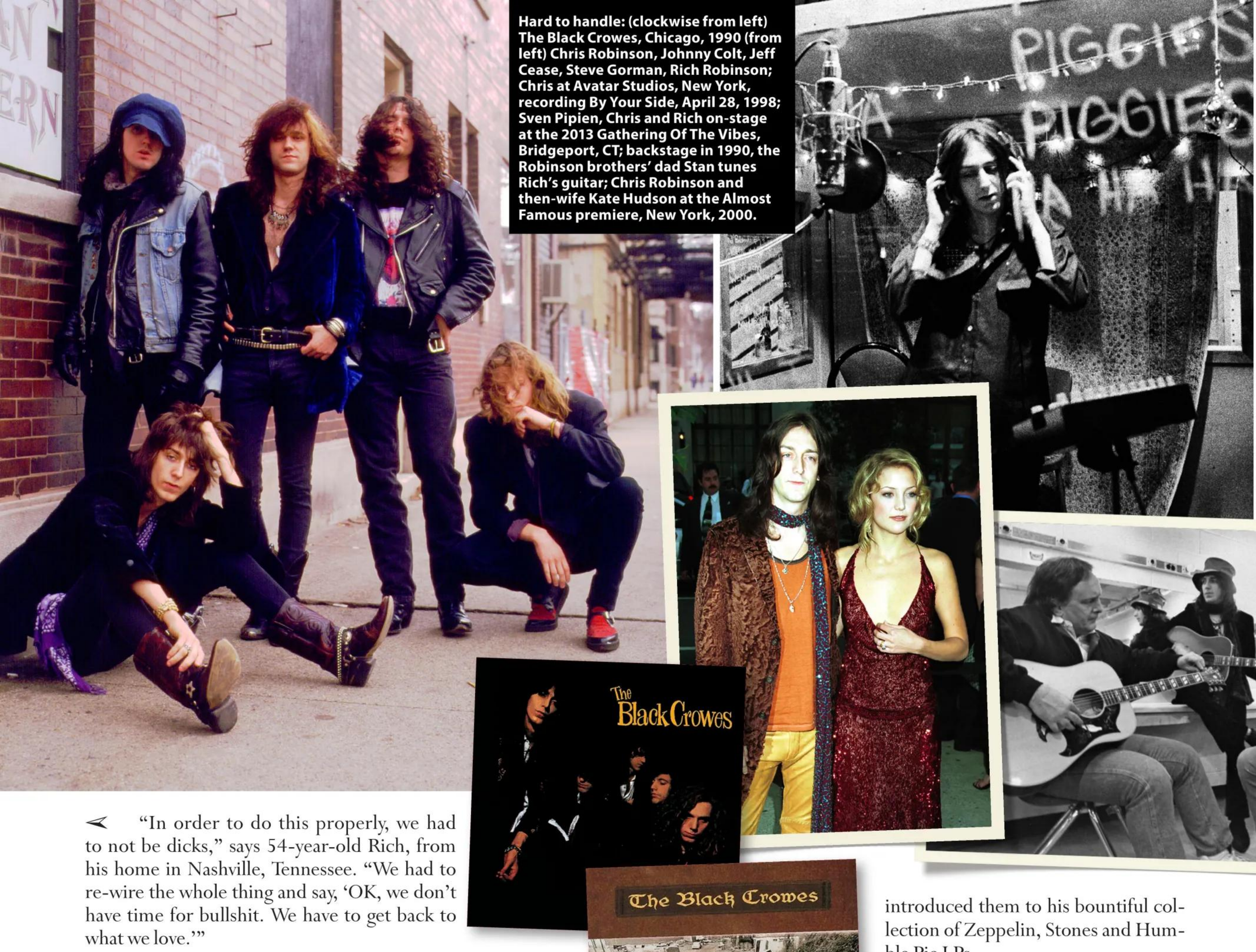
It's a far cry from the last century. In 1990, The Black Crowes' debut album, *Shake Your Money Maker*, catapulted their fresh, youthful take on vintage rock into the US Top 5. But the *enfant terrible* Robinson already had a reputation for deriding rival acts and calling out their corporate paymasters.

"No, I don't have regrets," the 56-year-old says, when he recalls comparing Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst to a GI Joe doll and Britney Spears to Barbie. "But it feels like we were the last generation to have opinions. I figured it was my right to say these things, but, really, I was trying to be funny at the expense of other people's shit – which was immature."

Chris and his younger, guitar-playing sibling, Rich, talk a lot about maturity. After all, it was their shit that derailed the group. By 2015, the last time they broke up, The Black Crowes had enjoyed nine US Top 30 albums (including the Number 1 *The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion*) and connected with an audience that extended far beyond hard rock fans, but their internal dynamic, always toxic, had become untenable. The Robinsons told everyone that, this time, it was over for good. Except it wasn't.

In 2019, the brothers announced a reunion tour to celebrate *Shake Your Money Maker*'s 30th birthday, which they performed with a band shorn of previous members. Now, rejoined by bassist Sven Pipien – a collaborator from 1997 onwards – they're poised to release a new album, *Happiness Bastards*.

Tom Sheehan



Hard to handle: (clockwise from left) The Black Crowes, Chicago, 1990 (from left) Chris Robinson, Johnny Colt, Jeff Cease, Steve Gorman, Rich Robinson; Chris at Avatar Studios, New York, recording By Your Side, April 28, 1998; Sven Pipien, Chris and Rich on-stage at the 2013 Gathering Of The Vibes, Bridgeport, CT; backstage in 1990, the Robinson brothers' dad Stan tunes Rich's guitar; Chris Robinson and then-wife Kate Hudson at the Almost Famous premiere, New York, 2000.

Paul Natkin/Getty, George De Sota/Liaison/Getty, Acey Harper/Getty, Catherine McGann/Getty

➤ "In order to do this properly, we had to not be dicks," says 54-year-old Rich, from his home in Nashville, Tennessee. "We had to re-wire the whole thing and say, 'OK, we don't have time for bullshit. We have to get back to what we love.'"

IN 1985, THE TEENAGE ROBINSONS WERE LIVING in Marietta, a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, and playing in Mr Crowe's Garden. Sven Pipien first encountered them at a battle-of-the-bands held in the local Catholic girls' school: "Mr Crowe's Garden beat my group and, even then, Chris had something. He was already projecting."

It was a rare moment of validation for Chris. "When we were teenagers, I didn't know if I could sing," he says. "I wasn't encouraged. My dad was a singer and he thought I was talentless. Maybe he was onto something, I don't know…"

Stan Robinson had scored a modest rockabilly hit with 1959's Boom-A-Dip-Dip, before becoming a clothing sales rep. His Dylan and Buffalo Springfield records later became his offspring's gateway drug. "Then we found our own musical identity," says Rich. "R.E.M. were huge in the South and we discovered The Cramps, The dB's, the Dead Kennedys…"

The song Flesh Wound on *Happiness Bastards* sounds like a throwback to something Mr Crowe's Garden might have played at Atlanta's White Dot club in the mid-'80s. "It's got that desperate feeling I used to get when I listened to X," suggests Rich.

In 1987, the group poached drummer Steve Gorman from Pipien's group, Mary My Hope, and the music started to evolve. "I remember picking Sven up in my little car to sign the lease on a house we were renting together," says Chris. "Sven was a clove cigarette-smoking Doors fan, and his band were into acid way before us. I stuck on a cassette of the Flying Burrito Brothers, and he was like, 'Why are you listening to fucking country music?'"

Mr Crowe's Garden signed to Def American in '89, where their producer, George Drakoulias, encouraged the name change, and introduced them to his bountiful collection of Zeppelin, Stones and Humble Pie LPs.

The Crowes (now completed by guitarist Jeff Cease and bassist Johnny Colt) re-emerged with flowing locks and a retro shabby chic wardrobe. Their new sound was classic rock re-imagined through the prism of punk and indie, and with a touch of "fucking country music".

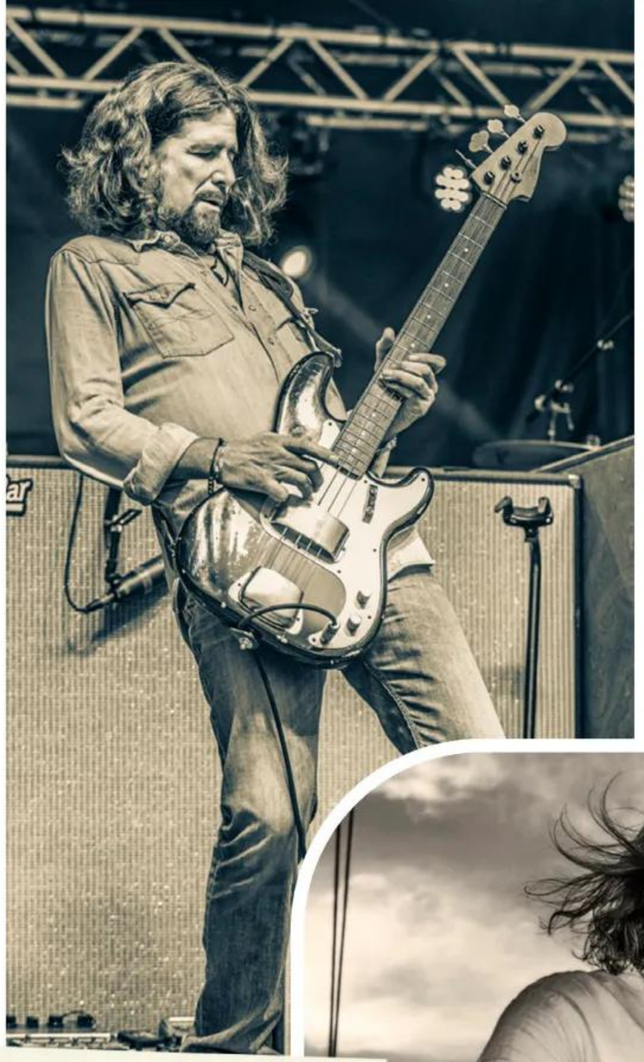
"It took me a while to understand," admits Pipien. "At first it seemed absurd, kind of silly. Mr Crowe's Garden always had a hard edge but they were an artsy band. Then Rich gave me a demo of *Shake Your Money Maker* and I went, OK, this is making sense now."

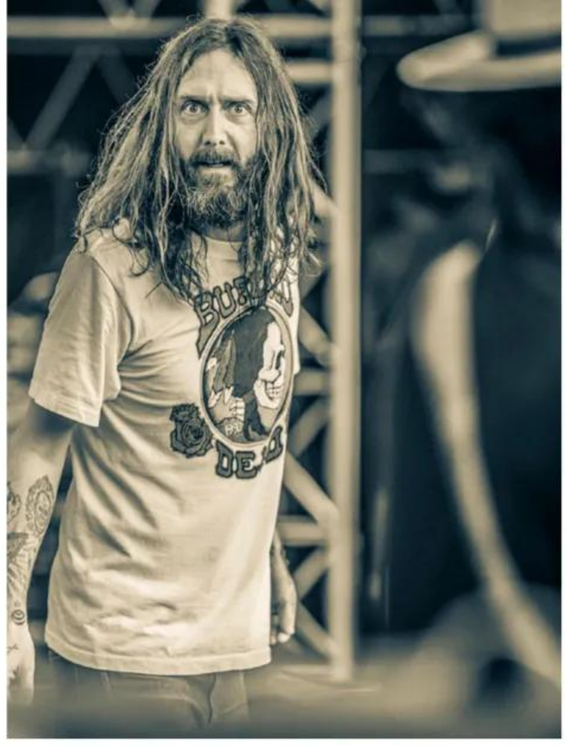
Everything happened fast. The band went from club dates to opening for AC/DC, Robert Plant, Aerosmith and ZZ Top; their debut album sold three million within 12 months, and its limber cover of Otis Redding's Hard To Handle and the ballad She Talks To Angels breached the American Top 30.

Maybe he was over-compensating, but Chris Robinson amplified his bratty rock-star persona and started calling out anyone or anything that didn't adhere to his idealistic view of rock'n'roll. "The Black Crowes are guilty of never kissin' anybody's motherfuckin' ass!" he declared.

"We were immature," says Rich. "But it was a crazy time. I was 19, graduated high school and a year later made *Shake Your Money Maker*. No one can prepare you for success, so we ran away."

IN MARCH 1991, THE CROWES WERE DUMPED from ZZ Top's arena jaunt after Chris slagged off the tour sponsor, Miller Lite, on-stage. Soon he was back in the press,





damning chart-topping pop stars New Kids On The Block as "talentless pricks".

"A lot of my comments during that time came out of being in a depression," he claims. "Back then, no one cared if you were depressed and had to go on a press tour. If I have a tinge of regret, it would be the way I came across as so outspoken in the media, and how that became the headline more than how good the music was."

The Crowes' music was also misunderstood. Critics fixated on the band's Southern roots, but theirs were Radio Free Europe, not Free Bird. "We never sounded like fucking Lynyrd Skynyrd," laughs Chris. "The Stones? Yeah, I get it. But, 'Oh you guys sound like the Faces.' We didn't, really, we just wore flares."

Sometimes, the Crowes' single-mindedness was a blessing (they refused label boss Rick Rubin's suggestion that they perform in front of a Confederate flag), and sometimes a curse. "Whenever we put a record out, we ran away from it – even *Shake Your Money Maker*," admits Rich. "We got an arena tour with Aerosmith and the first night we opened with a new song, a slow, 10-minute dirge. The people around us were saying, 'What are you doing?' And we're like, 'But we wrote a new song, we think it's cool.' We didn't understand how it worked."

Future Guns N'Roses guitarist Marc Ford replaced Jeff Cease for 1992's *The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion*, a gumbo of blues, gospel and hard rock that went Top 5 in the UK and the US, without a hit single.

"In the pantheon of our shit, *Shake Your Money Maker* is the big one but *Southern Harmony* is the best one," believes Chris. "When we did the *Southern Harmony* box set [December, 2023], George Drakoulias listened to Remedy and Sometimes Salvation and said, 'Y'know, this is pretty unique music.' It's rock'n'roll but it didn't sound like what everybody else was doing. We just let the music grow."

The music didn't stop growing. 1994's *Amorica* took two years and $80,000-worth of abandoned recording sessions (including a whole other unreleased album). The group blamed the excess on Chris's escalating drug use, his expanding ego and an obsession with their new touring partners, the Grateful Dead.

Jay Blakesberg (3)

> "A lot of my comments came out of being in a depression. Back then, no one cared if you were depressed and had to go on a press tour."
> Chris Robinson

Anyone who interviewed the brothers back then experienced their tense dynamic. There'd be Chris, holding forth, sprawled like a velvet-clad praying mantis on a hotel bed, while a stony-faced Rich sat on the other side of the room, interjecting whenever his brother paused for breath. In 2019, Rich told this writer that the Crowes nearly broke up four times while making *Amorica*: "And I nearly kicked the shit out of Chris multiple times."

"Chris and Rich were always fighting," says Pipien. "But as soon as you picked a side, the other one would jump straight in and defend his brother."

"*Amorica* was a super strong record," declares Chris. But Walmart and other chain stores refused to stock it because of the cover model's thong and pubic hair. "That record was about excess, though. That image was saying, 'Look how gratuitous and gross we are in America. We don't have love, we have *this*.' It wasn't meant to be, like… a sexy thing."

It's hard not to hear Spinal Tap's bemused Nigel Tufnel – "What's wrong with being sexy?" – in Chris's explanation. But it was typical of his mindset. "[The brothers] thought The Black Crowes was the sun and the industry was the planets," wrote Steve Gorman in 2019's whistle-blowing memoir, Hard To Handle.

THE SONGS ON *AMORICA* WERE DEEP AND cosmic, but they weren't She Talks To Angels, and it stalled outside the US Top 10. "From a commercial standpoint we shot ourselves in the foot," admits Rich. "We were stubborn and that thwarted our rise, but at least we felt better about ourselves musically."

Marc Ford and Johnny Colt both disappeared after 1996's *Three Snakes And One Charm*. "That album came from the druggiest period of our lives," murmurs Chris. "Except for Rich."

The singer recently experienced an epiphany while watching a music documentary. "It was one of the Cocteau Twins or My Bloody Valentine," he grins. "Anyway, it was a shoegazing documentary, and one of them said, 'If we'd just stopped for six months…' I thought, Yes! But you don't stop for six months when you're in a band, because if you do, you think it'll disintegrate, so you keep going and end up spinning your wheels."

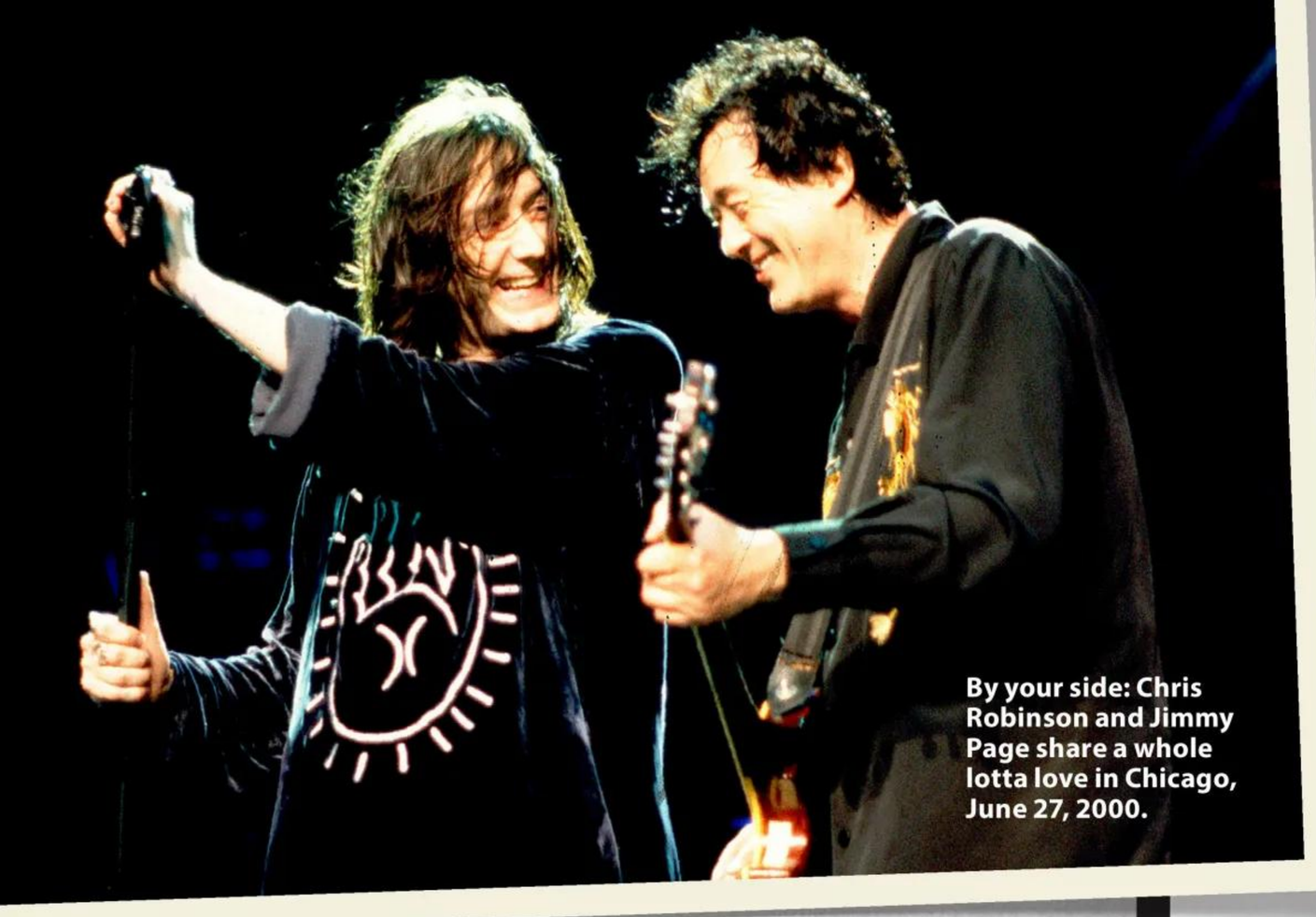
The Crowes might have been disintegrating, but they hired a new guitarist, Audley Freed, and invited Sven Pipien to replace Johnny Colt. "I didn't have to think twice because I was in a terrible place," Pipien laughs. "My band, Mary My Hope, had broken up and I was working at a pizza restaurant."

Pipien compares his Crowes debut, *By Your Side*, to *Happiness Bastards*. "It was similar to what's going on now. Trying to revamp the band, going back to how it all started, with the energy and the driving power."

"I didn't like *By Your Side* for a long time," says Chris. "Because I felt pushed into a corner and I really amped up my 'Fuck you!' to the people around me. But I think there are some good compositions on there."

Pipien also had the advantage of knowing the brothers as teenagers and having shared a house with Chris. "Sven's still kinda pissed we beat his band at that Catholic girls' school in 1985," jokes Chris. "But it's good to have another person who understands the blues and the R&B and the funk, but also T.Rex, Syd Barrett and Big Star."

Pipien also arrived in time for an unexpected detour. In ➢



By your side: Chris Robinson and Jimmy Page share a whole lotta love in Chicago, June 27, 2000.

"Everybody Was On Fire"

Jimmy Page and The Black Crowes was a marriage made in rock heaven. A shame it had to end so soon. "I would have worked with them," the Zep man tells Mark Blake.

"THE MAIN thing I remember the most was Chris Robinson's voice. It was just unbelievable…"

Jimmy Page is recalling when he first performed with The Black Crowes. It was an evening in June 1999 at London's Café De Paris, a show in aid of his Brazilian Children's Trust charity. Four months later, the surprise pairing of Page and The Black Crowes played their debut gig at New York's Roseland Ballroom. No-one was more surprised than Page when, at their first rehearsal, the band struck up Ten Years Gone from 1975's *Physical Graffiti*. "There's some tricky chords on that and they were playing them exact," says Page in wonderment. "They had all the harmony guitars with the solo."

Page credits the Crowes' then guitarist Audley Freed for drilling the rest of the band: "He was the MD and he was 100 per cent right." But he's equally effusive in his praise for the others. "They had the most incredible rhythm section," says Page. "Rich has got that huge guitar sound and I can't say enough about how good a singer Chris is."

On October 18, 1999, the Page/Crowes love-in played the first of two nights at Los Angeles' Greek Theatre, songs from which were released on the following year's *Live At The Greek* album. The tour setlist spliced Crowes material with Zeppelin's In My Time Of Dying, Custard Pie and Nobody's Fault But Mine. But the band, recently dropped by Columbia, were legally bound not to release re-recordings of their old songs on the live record.

"The usual thing: the lawyers start beating up the musicians," says Page. "It's a shame, because I didn't do a bad job of playing their stuff either. Those Black Crowes albums are so solid, they're like bloody architecture. Everybody was on fire."

But when the tour resumed in May 2000, Sven Pipien had been replaced by Buddy Guy's former bassist Greg Rzab, and Page had been diagnosed with sciatica. "After various treatments, I had to do something I never wanted to do with those guys and cancel, because of a back injury."

Chris later declared he'd grown weary of singing Robert Plant's lyrics and drummer Steve Gorman claimed Rich declined Page's offer to produce a track on the next Crowes album.

"I would have worked with them," insists Page now. "There was talk of it, and I had a traditional number, an old spiritual thing called Twelve Gates To The City [previously covered by the Staple Singers], that I wanted to do with them. If we'd done more shows together we may have done it."

It would be 11 years before Page performed with The Black Crowes again, joining them for an encore at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire. Then in 2015, he ran into Chris Robinson at Seattle's Museum Of Pop Culture.

"It was great to be able to have a chat with Chris and realise there was no hard feelings," says Page. "I think there's been a healing process between the brothers, because regardless of what kicked off in the past, they're never better than when they're together. It's a fierce combination. There's a lot of love in my heart for those guys."

≺ autumn 1999, guitarist Jimmy Page teamed up with The Black Crowes for a run of dates and the subsequent *Live At The Greek* album containing Led Zeppelin numbers and blues standards. The collaboration put The Black Crowes back in the spotlight (*By Your Side* had been their lowest-charting album yet). But Pipien was gone before the second leg, after missing a Crowes radio show performance in Charleston.

"Chris always laughs about me being the only guy that ever fired himself from the band," says Pipien, who claims he was given an incorrect date sheet and didn't know he had to be in Charleston. "They all went to the gig and my wife had to drive me. I got there an hour late. I thought they'd understand when I told them what happened. But I wasn't calm. I was immature in the way I dealt with thinking I'd been wronged."

According to an interview with Rich from this time, Pipien told the Crowes' manager, "'You guys don't want to hear the truth…' and started freaking out and saying how he speaks to John Lennon."

"It's a complicated thing," says Pipien warily. "We were miscommunicating by being on different planes. The band was toxic and, let's just say, charged with jet fuel. There was a lot of energy. But one minute it was, 'Oh my God, I'm in Led Zeppelin!', and then suddenly I was without a job because I got all angry."

There was a grim irony to all this. One of the things the brothers most feared was their band "turning into a cliché". Even today, Chris prefaces some of his comments with, "At the risk of sounding like a cliché…" But the clichés were piling up: Class A drug use, communicating with a dead Beatle, and the textbook sibling rivalry that ripped the Everlys and The Kinks apart.

In 2000, Chris married his second wife, Almost Famous actress Kate Hudson. Now he was being followed by the paparazzi and photographed at red carpet events wearing black tie and shades. Chris wrote songs inspired by Hudson on that year's *Lions* album. But after 2001's knowingly titled Tour Of Brotherly Love with Oasis, the Crowes went on hiatus.

During the time apart, Chris and Rich both made solo albums. "Being in The Black Crowes was like being in a submarine," says Rich. "So to get out of there and play with other drummers and bassists and singers gave me a tremendous new experience."

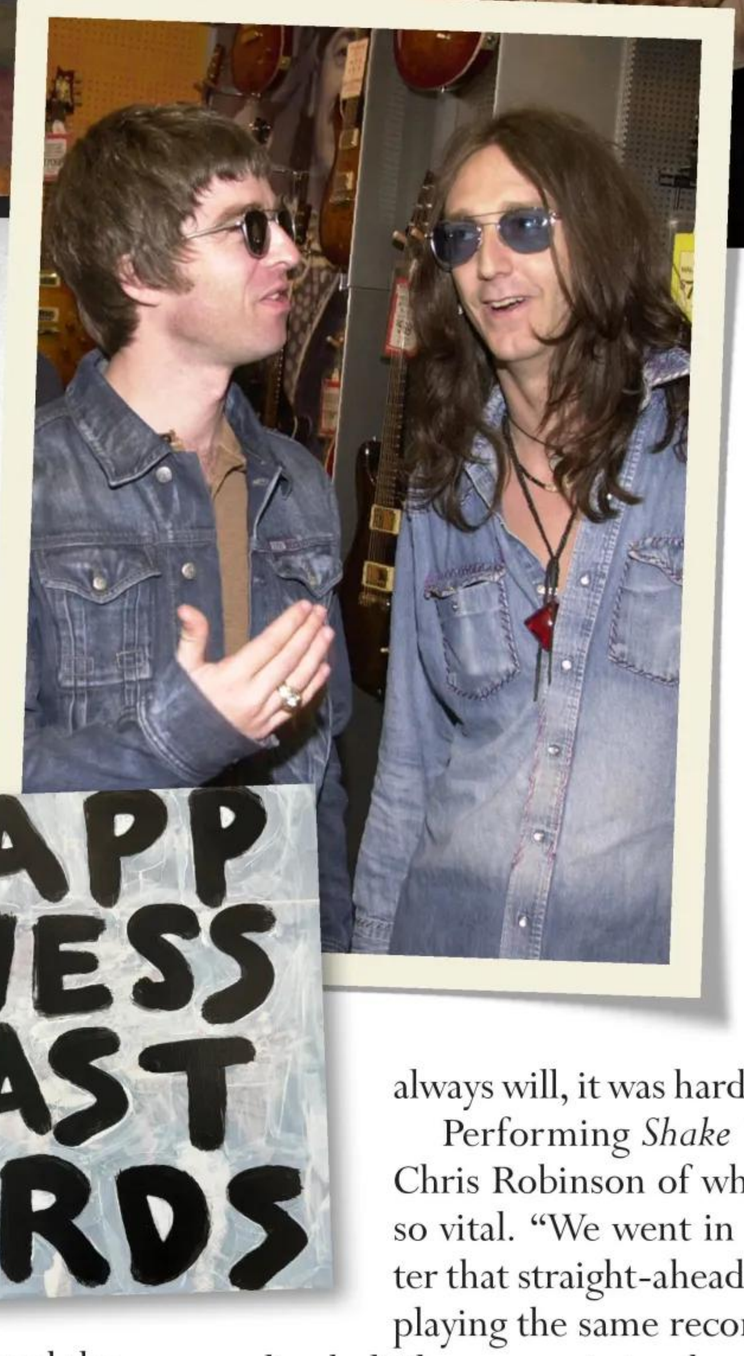
The brothers put the band back together in 2005. Among the first people they called was Pipien, but various guitarists, including a returning Marc Ford, came and went. Today, Chris names 2008's *Warpaint* as one of his favourite Crowes albums, but the following year's *Before The Frost… Until The Freeze* would be their last studio record for two decades.

In January 2015, Rich announced that The Black Crowes were splitting up for good. The tipping point was Chris demanding his brother surrender his equal share of the band and that their original partner, Steve Gorman, relinquish 100 per cent of his and become a salaried musician.

According to Gorman in Hard To Handle, it was the singer's third and now ex-wife, Allison Bridges, who e-mailed the Crowes' management with these demands. This request widened a rift that would take years to heal.

CHRIS ROBINSON IS NOW MARRIED TO ARTIST Camille Johnson and no longer trying to take his brother's share of The Black Crowes. "I call my time away 'the wilderness years,'" he says, quietly. "I was really resentful and angry about The Black Crowes, and I went through some pretty rough spots in personal relationships."

During this second hiatus, Chris formed the "folky, whimsical" Chris Robinson Brotherhood, and Rich bounced between solo projects and a new ensemble, The Magpie Salute, whose line-up included Marc Ford and Sven Pipien. Yet neither brother could match what they'd achieved together. There was pathos, too, in Chris performing Black Crowes songs in a new group, As The Crow Flies, in 2018. A year later, the Robinsons announced the *Shake Your Money*



Harmony companions: (above left, from left) The Black Crowes in August 1992, Johnny Colt, Rich Robinson, Steve Gorman, Marc Ford, Chris Robinson; Chris and Rich now – "We're grown men now"; "My brother's more annoying than yours…" Noel Gallagher and Chris talk happy families, May 14, 2001.

> "We were miscommunicating by being on different planes. The band was toxic and, let's just say, charged with jet fuel."
> Sven Pipien

Maker anniversary tour, which was postponed until 2021 by the pandemic.

What prompted the reunion? "It was simple. I'd written some songs and thought I'd love to hear my brother sing them," replies Rich. "I mentioned this to a friend of ours who's neutral and knows how to navigate between us. He told me Chris had called him and said the same. We didn't rush into anything, but it opened the door."

"There is no diminishing my wife Camille's role in breaking down a lot of resentments and anger," offers Chris. "My wife is a rock'n'roll woman and she opened my eyes up again – like, 'What's the fucking problem here?' I'd been guilty. Our dad passed away a decade ago, but I wasn't friendly with anyone and wasn't even speaking to my mum."

The Robinson offspring also had a hand in the family reunion. Chris has two children, Rich has seven. "And five of them are under 13," says the guitarist wearily. "They're like, 'What's up with Uncle Chris? What's up with that guy?' Kids take no prisoners."

Initially, none of the other ex-members were asked to join the reunion. The current Crowes line-up is completed by guitarist Nico Bereciartua, keyboard player Erik Deutsch and drummer Brian Griffin. Meanwhile, Steve Gorman's book seems to have made him *persona non grata*.

"I don't think we could bring in the negative influence," says Chris. "I can't be responsible for the other people that have been in this band, and whatever they wanted to get out of it, or whatever their level of self-importance or desperation. I can only be responsible for Rich and I – and Rich and I are blood."

"I had a range of emotions with Steve writing that book," says Pipien, who rejoined, for the third time, in 2021. "I couldn't begin to talk about some of the things Steve talked about, because it's private stuff with my friends. Then to cash in on it, and then blame the brothers for cashing in. That's a triple whammy. As much as I love Steve and always will, it was hard to swallow."

Performing *Shake Your Money Maker* live reminded Chris Robinson of what once made The Black Crowes so vital. "We went in a million different directions after that straight-ahead rock'n'roll record. Now we were playing the same record every night, and after a week I realised a little greasepaint and sparkles and showbiz is good."

HAPPINESS BASTARDS SOUNDS A LOT LIKE THE early Black Crowes, and is named after a novel by the San Franciscan beat poet, Kirby Doyle. "I'm an obsessive reader," says Chris. "But the title's meant to be funny – don't take everything so seriously. It's a love letter to rock'n'roll, if that's not too much of a cliché…

"We're not rehashing anything," he adds. "But it was amazing to get Rich and I working again. Although we'd have our hands on each other's throats on tour, it's different when it's just us in a room with guitars and writing songs. We're grown men now, and we had to get the fuck out of our own way, and let the vibes be the vibes."

"We need to do this right," states Rich. "Because I really don't want to fight and bullshit and break up… again."

Considering these words, what advice would they give their old touring partners, the still estranged Gallagher brothers?

"I'd say the same thing Noel said to me after Chris and I got in a big fight once," replies Rich. He pauses and MOJO half-expects to hear a Mancunian accent, but it doesn't come. "Noel said, 'Look, man, your brother is your brother. You just have to let him be.'"

Maybe, finally, The Black Crowes have learned to stop running away. Ⓜ

Paul Natkin/Getty (2), L Cohen/Getty, Ross Halfin

MOJO PRESENTS

An all-star supergroup of kick-ass singers from Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast and beyond, LES AMAZONES D'AFRIQUE are leading an assault on the structures and practices that oppress women in Africa. And they're doing it with music that lays down a similar challenge. "We never wanted to limit ourselves to the traditional sounds of Africa," they tell DAVID HUTCHEON.

Photography by KAREN PAULINA BISWELL

"I WAS SURE WE WOULD GO DOWN BADLY IN AFRICA…"

On a chilly day in England's West Midlands, Malian singer Mamani Keïta is explaining how Les Amazones D'Afrique, the predominantly female musical collective she has been part of since 2014, have stirred controversy on her home continent. Taking a break from filming a video with students from Birmingham's Ace Dance & Music School, she reflects on the three-pronged assault – well-known singers, experimental electronic music, provocative lyrics – she is leading on ingrained, male-dominated cultures.

"I thought people would walk away because it's not a sound you associate with Malian singers or a Malian audience," she says. "Yet the reception for the music has been phenomenal. For what we are saying… well, that's another story."

Over the course of three albums – 2017's *République Amazone*, 2020's *Amazones Power* and the imminent *Musow Danse* – with a constantly revolving cast featuring some of the continent's leading female stars (including Angélique Kidjo, Kandia Kouyaté, Fafa Ruffino and Mariam Doumbia), the group's singers have encouraged the communities in which they live to look in the mirror. They have criticised corruption, domestic violence and female genital mutilation and given their lyrics Afro-futurist settings, and it has made uncomfortable listening for many in their ➢

Karen Paulina Biswell

Women in revolt: the current Les Amazones D'Afrique in 2023 (from left) Fafa Ruffino, Mamani Keïta, Kandy Guira, Dobet Gnahoré.

“WE ALL COME FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, BUT THE PROBLEMS WE WERE FACING WERE THE SAME.”

Fafa Ruffino

Africa super-electrique: Les Amazones D’Afrique at WOMAD Festival, Charlton Park, Malmesbury, July 29, 2022 (from left) Kandy Guira, Mamani Keïta, Fafa Ruffino, and guitarist Salif Koné.

homelands, with critics suggesting Les Amazones have an anti-male agenda.

“Don’t believe all you read,” says Keïta. “We are not against men. If you need to describe the concept behind *République Amazone*, it is a love letter to men. Tell your men friends we love them, but we want to be heard across Africa.”

And beyond? Helping Les Amazones reach new audiences is California-based Irish producer Jacknife Lee, who joined the project for *Musow Danse*. “I think they need to be heard next to Beyoncé,” he reckons. “I wanted to make a record that would be in that arena, not a niche. Les Amazones are such important voices but they are also inventive and musically curious about sound. Even though the beats are quite odd, they trusted me to deliver something sympathetic to their message. Africa is producing some of the best records and artists at the moment, so it’s the right time for this record.”

LES AMAZONES’ STORY BEGINS IN 2014, WHEN THE French producer Valérie Malot was in Mali, working with Les Ambassadeurs, an all-star attempt to recreate the vibe of West Africa’s musically fertile 1970s. Some of the men involved, however, reckoned she was better suited to sorting out money and serving food than helming an album with them. In the evenings, she would visit Oumou Sangaré to complain about the situation. A groundbreaking singer herself, Sangaré knew all about making deals while her husband accepted the plaudits, and suggested Malot start an all-female band. Out of the men’s lack of respect rose Les Amazones D’Afrique – named after the female warriors of Greek mythology but also in tribute to Les Amazones De Guinée, an all-women group of soldier-musicians formed in the 1960s.

Turning the idea into reality proved easier said than done. Sangaré dropped out, fearful her status could hinder, rather than help, the new group’s development. Another Malian star, Mariam Doumbia of Amadou And Mariam, was involved but couldn’t commit to live dates. Mamani Keïta signed up: the high point of her career thus far had been the 2001 jazz album *Electro Bamako* but, based in France, she was struggling to get gigs.

“Valérie asked me to find a female drummer, a balafon player, a kora player,” recalls Keïta, “but the quality in Mali was not great.” Female singers are plentiful in Mali; instrumental players are a rarity for several deep-rooted reasons. “Our drummer, Mouneissa Tandina, had lost her husband because she was a musician,” remembers Malot. “His family said she was a prostitute because she went out to play music, and when you do something that goes against societal norms in Mali you struggle. We had our first concert at Radio Libre in Bamako. What can I say? We didn’t have so much audience.”

Out of yet more adversity, however, came three pointers towards the future. The first was a decision to use electronics rather than traditional instruments, and with it the arrival of the Irish producer Liam Farrell, AKA Doctor L – known for his work with Tony Allen and Mbongwana Star. The second was I Play The Kora, a song that argued for respect and equality using as a metaphor the West African harp, traditionally only played by men. Its complex traditional rhythm warped by dub effects, I Play The Kora would appear on *Les Amazones*’ first album and be voted one of the songs of 2017 by The New York Times.

The third was the discovery of Rokia Koné, heard singing at Radio Libre. “She’s a natural fighter,” says Malot. “She’s very wise, from the country, forced into an arranged marriage at 12. By the time I heard her sing she was divorced and her home was open to the poor, the sick, to all women. She is a true feminist, and she has an incredible voice.”

“I don’t come from a griot [ie. the class of poets and musicians]; the Konés are nobles,” explains the singer, who contributed five songs to *République Amazone*, “but I’d always liked to do things that are intended for men, like play football. I moved to Bamako around 2012, when I was 18, to be a backing singer for Aliya Coulibaly. Then he told me I was ready to go solo, do my own concerts, sing at weddings. That’s when Valérie heard me. I sing the pentatonic Bambara musical style, with polyrhythms and harmonies, but often I transform it into jazz or blues. I can’t stick to one genre.”

THE EMOTIONS STIRRED UP BY THEIR DEBUT caught Les Amazones unprepared. In addition to the New York Times endorsement, the track La Dame Et Ses Valises, sung by the Nigerian soul starlet Nneka, was selected by Barack Obama as one of his songs of the year. Abroad, they were activist heroes; at home, the coverage – if any – tended along the lines of “know your place”. Nneka, for one, is unrepentant. “As women,” she says, “it’s important we stand up for ourselves, that we have a voice and speak up, especially when something doesn’t sit well with us.”

Getty (5)

Liberation game: (clockwise from left) Rokia Koné at WOMAD, July 28, 2022; Mariam Doumbia, Kandia Kouyaté and Mamani Keïta at WOMAD, July 31, 2016; Jacknife Lee at the Beacon Theatre, New York, April 16, 2023; Nneka at the Paléo Festival, Nyon, July 23, 2008.

AMAZONIAN TRIBUTARIES

Together and solo: the highlights so far…

MAMANI KEÏTA & MARC MINELLI
Electro Bamako
(Universal, 2001)

"I like working with outsiders," is Keïta's cool take on this *sui generis* jazz album, which finds her working with a 12-piece band to produce a Malian hybrid featuring piano, brushes on drums and sax. More Birdland than Bamako, then, and it hasn't dated a bit in more than two decades.

FAFA RUFFINO
Ilé
(Livin' Astro, 2011)

Having served her apprenticeship behind Manu Dibango (Cameroon), Mory Kanté (Guinea) and Papa Wemba (DR Congo), Ruffino's debut (and sadly sole album to date) is a polyglot, pan-African affair influenced by Angélique Kidjo (Benin) and focused on "immigration, violence against women, forced marriage… and all those things."

LES AMAZONES D'AFRIQUE
République Amazone
(Real World, 2017)

Dub, techno, deep grooves and praise singing: you'd be forgiven for thinking Doctor L, the producer, is just showing off, but the songs are triumphant. "There's something in the attitude, the swagger, that means Africa always shows through," says Nneka, whose La Dame Et Ses Valises is a highlight. "The ruggedness in the production goes well with a Lagos vibe."

LES AMAZONES D'AFRIQUE
Amazones Power
(Real World, 2020)

A mixed bag, with the diaspora given a greater say, as if suggesting that ex-pats understand the message better than those at home. The production is not as aggressive, giving it a late-night feel that is occasionally disturbing but less exciting. A reset was in the offing, but circumstances meant that turned out to be a struggle.

ROKIA KONÉ & JACKNIFE LEE
Bamanan
(REAL WORLD, 2022)

Jacknife Lee wanted to find the guitarist on a Les Amazones remix; instead he was directed to Koné and decided to produce her debut. "He brings new perspectives to my music," says the singer, who admits to being unfamiliar with Lee's more famous clients. After this, Lee asked Malot if he could help her with Les Amazones' third.

The second album, 2020's *Amazones Power*, took a different approach, putting men to one side and focusing on issues around female genital mutilation (FGM), a traditional procedure still inflicted on up to 90 per cent of female adults in parts of West Africa, where it is seen as a matter of family honour. Joining the team at this time, Ghana's Fafa Ruffino has strong views on FGM, or "excision", a practice performed only by other women.

"My dad was a doctor, my mum was a politician and she had been running an organisation fighting for women's rights before they married," says Ruffino. "She has fought all her life against forced marriage, against excision. But it was only after she'd heard my song Fights that she told me she had gone through excision too. I didn't know what to say. She was crying. Our fight, Les Amazones' fight, is to tell the mothers and grandmothers to stop this practice and to campaign for girls' rights to go to school."

Amazones Power was released in January 2020, just before lockdown scotched plans to take their message on the road. The singers retreated into their homes and made plans for a post-pandemic world. "We all come from different countries," observes Ruffino, "but once again the problems we were facing were the same. This period made me stronger and more determined to make women everywhere understand they are not alone."

Four years on comes *Musow Danse* (Women's Dance), an album that sets out to celebrate rather than provoke. Keïta (the only ever-present) and Ruffino are joined by Ivory Coast pair Dobet Gnahoré and Kandy Guira, plus the returning Nneka, who had skipped *Amazones Power*; Koné is taking time out to concentrate on her solo career.

"This time we are saying there are no borders when it comes to being the best version of yourself," says Nneka. "My song, Bobo Me, is about trying to empower myself to move forward, but not just me, everyone else who is listening. It's not just about what one sex is doing to the other sex, it's also about what we are doing to ourselves."

Perhaps the most obvious change, however, is the arrival of Jacknife Lee – a veteran of albums by U2 and Taylor Swift, and the producer of Koné's 2022 solo debut album, *Bamanan*. The recording process reflects the state-of-the-art nature of the music: the women would outline their songs and send sound files to Lee's Topanga Canyon studio; he'd produce musical stems for them; they would finish off their parts and return them to him to complete.

"We never wanted to limit ourselves to the traditional sounds of Africa," explains Keïta. "We are using modern electronic music to reach the widest audience. There's so much I can learn when I go outside Mali, and that will make our music richer far into the future."

Keïta's desire to see their music, and audience, broaden reveals Les Amazones' grip on reality: no one is fooled into thinking *Musow Danse* is the final chapter in their struggle. But it's a flag to which many will rally.

"We know this fight didn't start with us," says Ruffino, "not even with our mothers, but we want it to continue with our daughters."

The Thing With

Spotlight kids: *Band On The Run*'s cover stars get framed (clockwise from left) Michael Parkinson, Kenny Lynch, James Coburn, Christopher Lee, John Conteh, Denny Laine, Linda McCartney, Clement Freud, Paul McCartney, October 28, 1973.

FEATHERS

PAUL BAND ON THE RUN EXCLUSIVE!

Media haters, Lagos muggers, runaway musicians: **PAUL McCARTNEY**'s greatest non-Beatles album braved disaster upon debacle before clinching a wildly unlikely victory. In a candid and emotional interview conducted just hours after the death of Wingman **DENNY LAINE**, Paul rewinds half a century to relive ***BAND ON THE RUN*, WINGS**' future-facing magnum opus, refreshed and 'underdubbed' for 2024. "Can you imagine trying to start another band after The Beatles?" he asks **WILL HODGKINSON**. "With Denny, we managed it."

Photography by **CLIVE ARROWSMITH**.

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MINUTES BEFORE PAUL McCARTNEY CALLS FROM BRAZIL, for an unusually lengthy explanation of how 1973's *Band On The Run* saved Wings from crashing to the ground, news comes that Denny Laine has died.

"I heard that Denny was getting better, there was hope for the future, but obviously not," says McCartney of the singer and guitarist who stuck with him in Wings through good times and bad. "It's very sad because Denny was great. Can you imagine trying to start another band after The Beatles? With Denny, we managed it."

To get a sense of how Wings endured, how they overcame the seemingly insurmountable challenge of being the band nobody wanted Paul McCartney to be in, you only have to look at the setlist for this night's concert at São Paulo's Allianz Parque. Nestled among Fab faves including Get Back and Lady Madonna are Jet, Let Me Roll It, Nineteen Hundred And Eighty-Five and Band On The Run; all featured on the 1973 album that enjoys a 50th birthday reissue in February, with a disc of mixes shorn of orchestral overdubs – trailed by a version of the title track released in December.

"People spend a lot of money to come to these concerts. Am I really going to do a show without Let It Be or Hey Jude? I think they would feel cheated," says McCartney. "You get to know what they like. For that reason there is some kind of vindication in seeing the Wings songs go down so well after all these years."

Perhaps he could go further. How about reviving Bluebird, the delicate acoustic classic from *Band On The Run*, which uses the image of a bird in flight as a metaphor for the power of love transcending our mind-forged manacles? McCartney mulls it over.

"We could do a good Bluebird because we have a horn section... You know what? It's a thought," he decides. "Now I have to learn it. Thanks a lot for giving me more work to do."

IN THE EARLY '70s, McCARTNEY KNEW ALL ABOUT HAVING work to do. The end of the band against which all others must be judged left him in a depression, exacerbated not only by feeling he had peaked aged 27 but also the law suit he filed on December 31, 1970, in response to John Lennon, George Harrison and Ringo Starr appointing Allen Klein as Beatles manager. The old gang fell apart. McCartney needed a new gang. It turned out to be his family.

"Yes, that was the feeling," says McCartney. "After the end of The Beatles I was faced with certain alternatives. One was to give up music entirely and do God knows what. Another was to start a super-band with very famous people, Eric Clapton and so on. I didn't like either so I thought: How did The Beatles start? It was a bunch of mates who didn't know what they were doing. That's when I realised maybe there is a third alternative: to get a band that isn't massively famous, to not worry if we don't know what we're doing because we would form our character by learning along the way. It was a real act of faith. It was crazy, actually."

The inspiration came, strangely enough, from Johnny Cash.

"We were in bed one night," he recalls, "newly married, when Johnny Cash came on the telly with a new band he'd formed with Carl Perkins, a big hero of mine. There they were, playing with some country musicians I had never heard of, looking like they were having fun. I thought: here's Johnny, he's back, he's doing it. So I turned to Linda and said: Do you want to form a band? And she went: 'Sure.' That's how our relationship was. Do you want to go and live on a farm in Scotland? 'Why not?'"

Not just any farm in Scotland, but one that would provide McCartney with the solace he needed after the dream of The Beatles ended in litigation and despair. High Park near Campbeltown is a surprisingly modest three-bedroom farmhouse that McCartney bought for £35,000 in June 1968 – a wise investment, given that it went on to inspire McCartney and Denny Laine's 1977 megahit Mull Of Kintyre. With 183 acres of land, it was a refuge from Beatlemania. It soon became a refuge from The Beatles themselves.

"The greatest thing about High Park was that in London, we were swimming through treacle with business," says McCartney, still sounding pained at the memory. "Every afternoon I had to go into the Apple office to face the latest horrible development. 'Allen Klein said this, and what do you think of that?' It was turgid, honestly a bad, bad time. Here's me, got into rock'n'roll to have a good time, and now I had this sluggish life, dragging my way through one mess after another. Everything at Apple was about dealing with old things, and the brilliance of me and Linda was that we wanted to do new things. She had a romantic American dream of Scotland, which was lovely because it cued into mine."

McCartney, his 1970 solo album, featured a back cover photograph of the singer in the Scottish wilds, baby Mary poking out of his sheepskin coat. Yet the declaration of rural independence was a premature one. McCartney vs Lennon, Harrison, Starkey and Apple Corps opened on January 19, 1971 at the Royal Courts Of Justice in London, with McCartney engaging in the 11-day hearing to free himself of their 10-year partnership agreement, held onto by Klein, which meant all proceeds from individual projects went into the Beatles account. It also meant his earnings were frozen and he and Linda were living on her savings. McCartney wanted to sue Klein, but since the ➢

Free as a bird: (right) McCartney in Sweden during Wings' 1972 tour; (left) cash questions for Allen Klein, John Lennon and Yoko Ono, 1969; above 1970 solo LP *McCartney*.

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Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo, Björn Larsson Ask/KB/TT/Shutterstock

Power trio: the Wings core, 1973 (from left) Linda McCartney, Denny Laine, Paul McCartney.

"I thought: How did The Beatles start? A bunch of mates who didn't know what they were doing. It was a real act of faith. It was crazy, actually." PAUL McCARTNEY

Flight PATTERN

Smooth take-offs and bumpy landings: the '70s' other Wings albums, annotated by TOM DOYLE.

Wildlife

★★★

(Apple, 1971)

Inspired by Dylan's swift creation of *New Morning* the previous year, McCartney booked only a week at Abbey Road in August '71 for Wings' debut, determined – as drummer Denny Seiwell remembered – "to give the world a real true look at a new band." Opening tracks Mumbo and Bip Bop were maybe *too* loose and jammy, and side two was where the real action was: Lennon truce ballad Dear Friend; Paul and Linda channelling the Everlys in the lovely Some People Never Know.

Red Rose Speedway

★★★

(Apple, 1973)

The result of protracted sessions during what Linda later described as "a terribly unsure period", *Red Rose Speedway* is best remembered for its gold standard Macca ballad My Love (featuring a great, improvised, one-take guitar solo from Henry McCullough). Other highlights include hypnotic Floyd-y jam Loup (1st Indian On The Moon) and Little Lamb Dragonfly, the dreamy ballad named after a near-frozen lamb nursed back to life by the McCartneys on their High Park farm.

Venus And Mars

★★★★

(Capitol, 1975)

Tantalising now to think that Lennon – before deciding to get back with Yoko – considered accepting McCartney's invitation to the LP's New Orleans sessions, *BOTR*'s follow-up was an assured one, recorded at Allen Toussaint's Sea-Saint Studio and completed in LA. The stirring title track/Rock Show twofer was tailor-made for the live arena, Magneto And Titanium Man was ace comic book bubblegum, and Letting Go was a deep, soulful groover. A transatlantic chart-topper.

Wings At The Speed Of Sound

★★★

(Parlophone, 1976)

By '76, Wings had settled into a stable line-up – Paul and Linda, the ever-adaptable Denny Laine, rock-solid drummer Joe English and Glaswegian firecracker guitarist Jimmy McCulloch – and *WATSOS* was an effort on their bandleader's part to share the spotlight. Laine revived his aching Go Now voice for The Note You Never Wrote, McCulloch fronted the louche yacht rock of Wino Junko, while Paul turned in the sterling Let 'Em In and the massive (five weeks at US Number 1) Silly Love Songs.

Wings Over America

★★★★

(Parlophone, 1976)

Wings' US tour of summer '76 elevated McCartney back to Beatle-y heights. This triple vinyl LP captured the on-stage energy and Fabs-friendly setlist, edited down and mixed at Abbey Road by McCartney from over 90 hours of tapes (already whittled down from 800 hours' worth by McCartney's live engineer). Witness the thrilled responses to Lady Madonna, Yesterday and Blackbird, from audiences revisiting 'The Beatles', 10 years after Candlestick Park.

London Town

★★★★

(Parlophone, 1978)

Working-titled *Water Wings* due to its creation on the Fair Carol, a yacht-turned-studio sailing around the Virgin Islands, its recording was interrupted by US Customs following a marijuana tip-off (none, for once, was found). The sounds were appropriately laid-back – see the mellow soul of Girlfriend (written for Michael Jackson, appearing on *Off The Wall*) and the warm-bath synth-funk of With A Little Luck. By its release, though, following more intra-band turmoil, Wings were a trio.

Wings Greatest

★★★★

(Parlophone, 1978)

A hits compilation offering collected proof that McCartney's gift for melody remained undimmed in the 1970s, *Wings Greatest* also found a place for non-album blockbuster Live And Let Die, proto-new waver Junior's Farm (from 1974) and 1977's enduring Mull Of Kintyre, which beat the record then held by She Loves You, selling 2.5 million copies to become, for a time, the biggest-selling UK single ever.

Back To The Egg

★★★

(Parlophone, 1979)

While McCartney would soon tire of holding a band together, the final line-up of Wings (featuring guitarist Laurence Juber and drummer Steve Holley) were in step with the new wave on *Back To The Egg*. Getting Closer sounded like Squeeze's version of The Beatles and the synth soul of Arrow Through Me a pre-echo of Hall & Oates' '80s hits. Going out with a bang, Rockestra Theme featured a massed ensemble starring Townshend, Gilmour and Bonham.

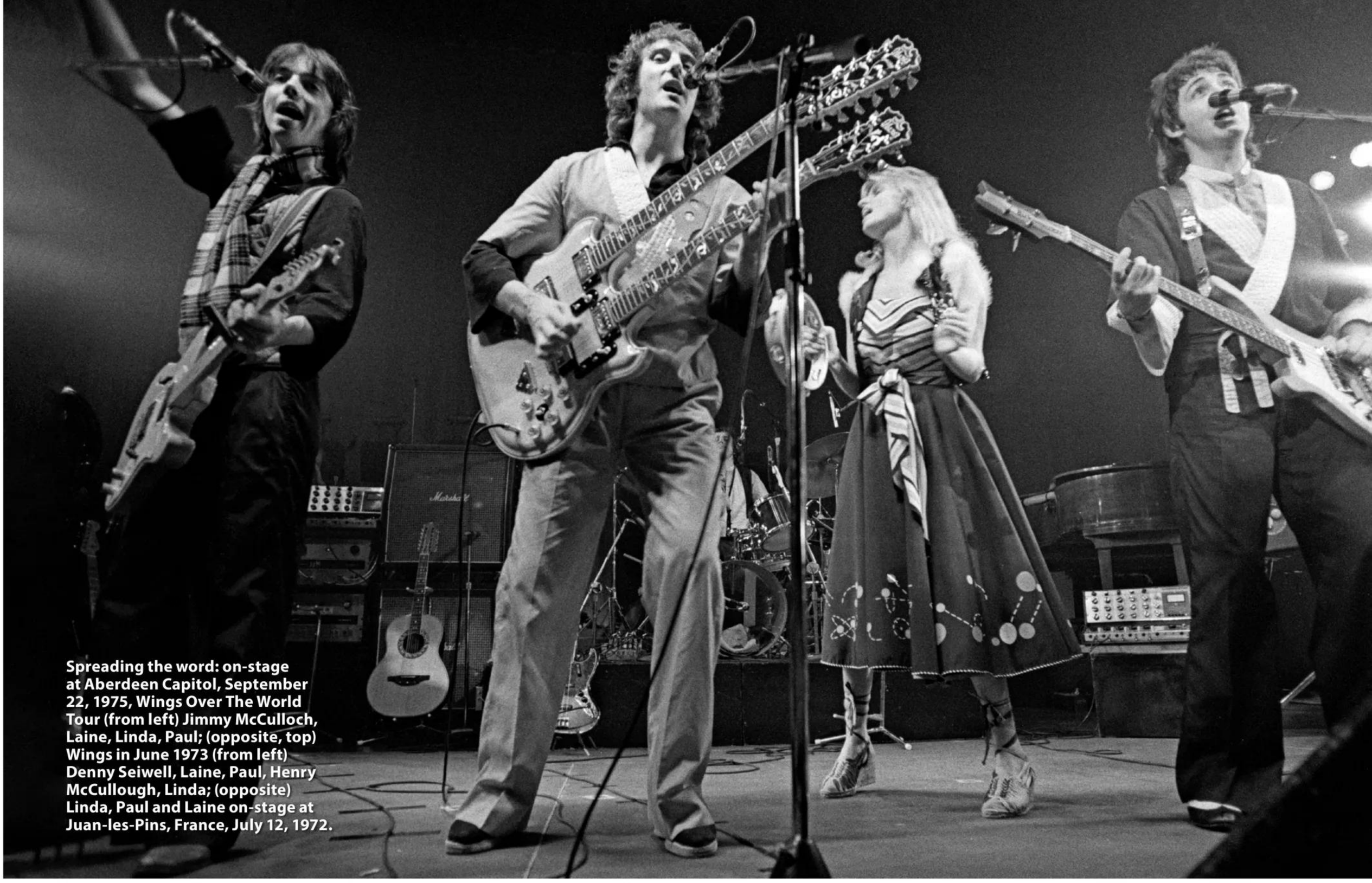
turtleneck-clad New Yorker had not been party to the original Apple agreement he had to sue his former bandmates instead.

"All these meetings were going on and there would be a call: 'You have to be in a meeting at three o'clock.' Suddenly it was: Sorry, can't make it, don't live in London any more. Now I'm on a farm in Scotland, and like most of our decisions it was stupid and brilliant at the same time. We got to know each other, we got to farm, we got to be in nature, we got to be free. With Klein I had to resist every little thing, every decision being made, while the others were very gung-ho: 'Yay, he's great!' It took them years to say: 'Actually, he isn't so great. And now *we're* going to sue him.'"

WINGS TOOK A WHILE TO TAKE FLIGHT. McCARTNEY won his first round to be free of The Beatles on March 12, 1971 after Mr Justice Stamp ruled in his favour for a dissolution of the partnership, but it would take another two years for his post-Beatles career to reach acceptance. After *Ram*, a commercial smash credited to Paul and Linda McCartney but not a critical one – "monumentally irrelevant" was Rolling Stone's verdict – McCartney invited drummer Denny Seiwell and guitarist Hugh McCracken, New York session men who contributed to the album, to High Park Farm. After checking into Campbeltown's Argyll Arms with their wives in tow, Seiwell and McCracken were given a tour of the farm, including the recording studio McCartney had installed in one of the outhouses. McCracken decided a life of sheep-shearing and good-time rocking wasn't for him and quit, but Denny Laine, under-employed after leaving the Moody Blues in 1966 and sleeping in his manager's office, joined at the suggestion of Seiwell soon afterwards. Together they made *Wild Life*, the as-yet unnamed band's unloved 1971 debut, laying down the tracks in a converted shed as McCartney taught Linda how to play keyboards.

"Linda was into horses, and I was lucky enough to be able to buy her a horse of her own," says McCartney of Wings' earliest days. "I remember, after all this strain and horror, after feeling like you weren't worth anything, when she showed me how to ride a horse for the first time… It was a lovely horse called Honour, not too difficult to ride, and as I was feeling the reins in my hands I thought: I've got some control here. It was great because until that point

Roger Bamber/Shutterstock, Reg Lancaster/Daily Express/Hulton Archive/Getty Images, Michael Putland/Getty Images

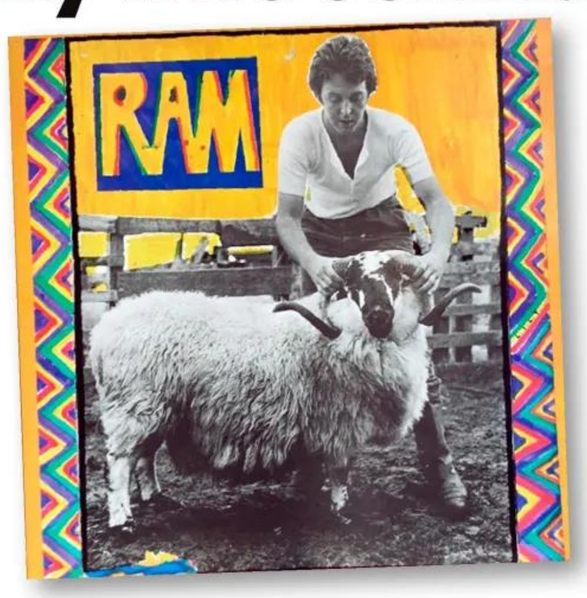


Spreading the word: on-stage at Aberdeen Capitol, September 22, 1975, Wings Over The World Tour (from left) Jimmy McCulloch, Laine, Linda, Paul; (opposite, top) Wings in June 1973 (from left) Denny Seiwell, Laine, Paul, Henry McCullough, Linda; (opposite) Linda, Paul and Laine on-stage at Juan-les-Pins, France, July 12, 1972.

"We were getting lousy reviews. But I wasn't motivated by having a fabulous group. I was motivated by not wanting to leave my wife behind." PAUL McCARTNEY

there was the feeling that I had absolutely no control over my own life. It was a really big thing. It was the start of Wings."

The name came to McCartney after an emergency caesarean section put Linda and their new daughter Stella in danger and he imagined winged angels watching over them. His idea for the band would evoke a similar innocence – proceeding as if he'd never been in the world's biggest group. It meant that on February 9, 1972, a social secretary for Nottingham University assumed a joke was being played on her when two men announced they were with Paul McCartney, he had a new band, and they were wondering if they could play for the students. So began the Wings university tour: 50p a ticket, with the band travelling from one provincial university to another in a run-down van, McCartney in the driver's seat and the children and two dogs in tow.



"With the dozen songs we had we said: 'Let's get out on the road and learn as we go,'" says McCartney. "We managed a set of about half an hour, then we repeated a few by lying and saying they were requests. We decided we would not rely on famous people or famous songs, which promoters were instantly dismayed about. 'Aren't you going to do Yesterday?' And doing something new wasn't easy, because my style was The Beatles' style."

Yet Wings would forge a distinct style – centred not least upon their harmonies. Paul, Linda and Denny Laine typically sang around one microphone and then double-tracked themselves to achieve a big, lush sound. It's where the contribution of Linda to the group, so often underplayed, came to the fore.

"Linda was a very musical person, but she was not a trained professional," Laine told Bill DeMain, a year before his death. "She hadn't done any live or studio work. So it took longer, but she could sing in tune and Linda took to it quite quickly. That blend became very popular and part of our sound. Even Michael Jackson said to Paul, 'Who's singing the harmonies there?' 'That's Denny and Linda' There was a sound there that can't be mimicked."

WINGS OFFERED McCARTNEY A chance to adapt to the changing landscape of the new decade, a world away from the Swinging Sixties elite in which The Beatles operated. Not only had working-class bands like the Sweet and Slade taken it back to basics with a glammed-up take on '50s rock'n'roll, but a handful of backroom session singers, songwriters and musicians were crafting melodic pop for everyday people, its jolliness providing an antidote to an increasingly bleak age of ballooning inflation, Northern Ireland tensions and three-day weeks. There was something very McCartney-esque about Blue Mink's Good Morning Freedom, the Brotherhood Of Man's United We Stand and The New Seekers' I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing: love and peace anthems for suburbanites feeling the pinch. McCartney's contribution to this harmony-rich world was James Paul McCartney, an April 1973 television special featuring the extended McCartney clan doing a pub singalong, Paul leading a Busby Berkeley style extravaganza, and singing Mary Had A Little Lamb in a field of sheep. Light entertainment for heavy times.

"When you look back at that era it was terrible, wasn't it?" says McCartney. "You think of your younger years as halcyon days, imagining them in a golden mist. Actually, there were bins piling up everywhere. There were cemeteries with unburied bodies."

There was indeed a UK gravediggers' strike, although that didn't happen until the 1978 Winter of Discontent. Nonetheless, ➢

We've Already Said GOODBYE

Denny Laine (1944-2023) was McCartney's (mostly) faithful foil in Wings. Arguably, his talent deserved more recognition. MAT SNOW delivers the eulogy.

SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 1967: a packed Saville Theatre in London raved over three acts seizing the moment. Their debut album a sensation, The Jimi Hendrix Experience were heading to Monterey; Procol Harum were about to hit Number 1 with A Whiter Shade Of Pale; and former Moody Blue Denny Laine had also come up with something thrillingly new: his Electric String Band.

Three years before fellow Brummie Jeff Lynne of The Move formed Electric Light Orchestra, Laine augmented a rock band with a string quartet of violins and cellos, conducted that night by a young American just arrived in swinging London, Tony Visconti.

"Mind-blowing," declared Disc & Music Echo, and in the audience freshly Peppered Beatles John and Paul – both pals from London's club scene – agreed. Stardom ahoy.

Things didn't quite work out that way for Laine, who died on December 5, aged 79. But they did work out.

"Denny was the most ambitious person I'd ever met. To hear him talk, just about anything was possible," remembered future Move and ELO member Beverley 'Bev' Bevan. "He was totally sure that he would make it big in the music business and told me that I would too."

This was 1962. Bev and fellow grammar school boy Brian Hines had just started training at rival Birmingham department stores. "I learned all about pianos and hi-fi equipment in the music department," recalled Hines, AKA Johnny Dean, leader of The Dominators, soon to abandon his retail career in pursuit of stardom and rechristen himself Denny (his childhood nickname) and Laine (after his sister's favourite singer Frankie).

Rebranded Denny Laine And The Diplomats – to whom he had lured Bevan from Ronnie And The Senators – they prospered on the local circuit with Denny-penned originals among the usual covers. "John Bonham used to watch us at the Wednesbury Youth Centre," Laine would remember. "Years later, drunk at my house, he started singing Why Cry, A Piece Of Your Mind and a few other originals we used to do. He knew all the words!"

But the Diplomats lacked Laine's ambition, so he quit and joined Ray Thomas and Mike Pinder to form what became The Moody Blues. Though Laine and Pinder co-wrote songs, and a faithful cover of Bessie Banks' soulful Go Now – beautifully sung by Laine – topped the UK charts in early 1965, Laine quit in 1966. And though self-penned Say You Don't Mind was a terrific song (as spotted by Colin Blunstone, whose excellent cover hit the UK Top 20 in 1972), Laine's original single version flopped in April 1967.

AFTER HIS Electric String Band also fizzled, Laine lived in a shed next to a pigsty in Andalucía learning flamenco guitar, then returned in 1969 to take up with Balls – a shifting line-up of Britrock stalwarts – then Ginger Baker's Air Force. But Laine was on his uppers when McCartney called in summer 1971.

Why had he remained on the Beatle's radar? Paul might have recalled the Electric String Band's forward thinking, Laine reflected, but clubbability was another factor: "If somebody needs another guy to join the band they'll pick their friends," he reflected, "like Ronnie Wood and the Stones. It's who you know."

What followed was Laine's golden decade – not as leader but as sidekick, a multi-instrumentalist who could write and sing and so share the Wings' workload of an album a year plus marathon gigs. His subaltern status was confirmed in the muted response to two solo albums, the Dylanesque *Ahh… Laine!* (1973) and a Buddy Holly tribute McCartney produced and played on, *Holly Days* (1976).

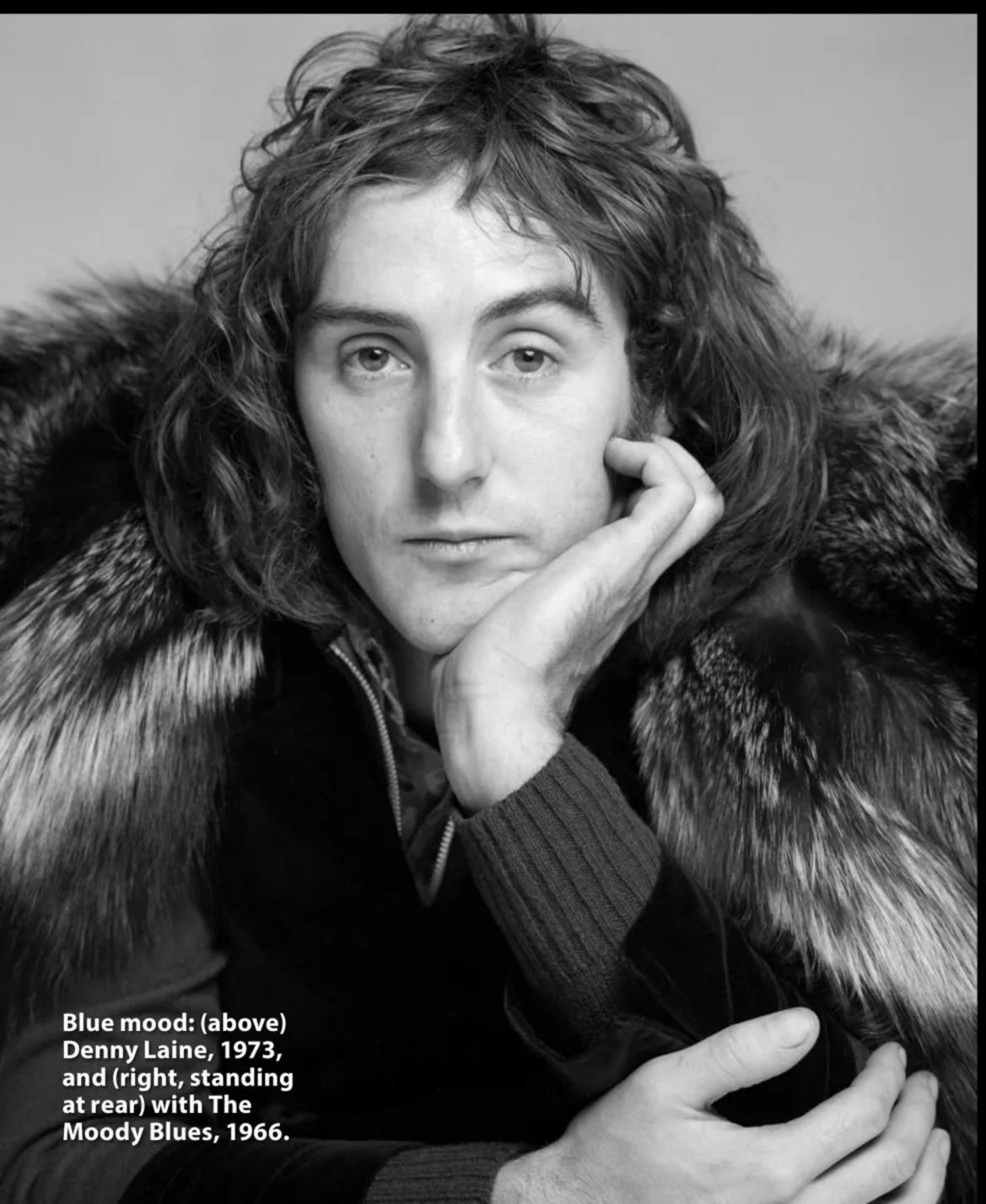
A pragmatist, Laine could live with second-class stardom but not second-class money. Despite co-writing Mull Of Kintyre, one of the biggest ever UK singles, his publishing deal was not great, and his Wings retainer was modest. Recently married to American model Jo Jo (who did not meet with the McCartneys' approval), Laine was counting on some £50,000 from Wings' 1980 tour of Japan – cancelled when the bandleader was busted – and the group ended a year later.

Though he played on McCartney's albums *Tug Of War* (1982) and *Pipes Of Peace* (1983), Laine felt used, and blabbed to The Sun newspaper. Crushed by an expensive divorce, it was rumoured he slept in his car.

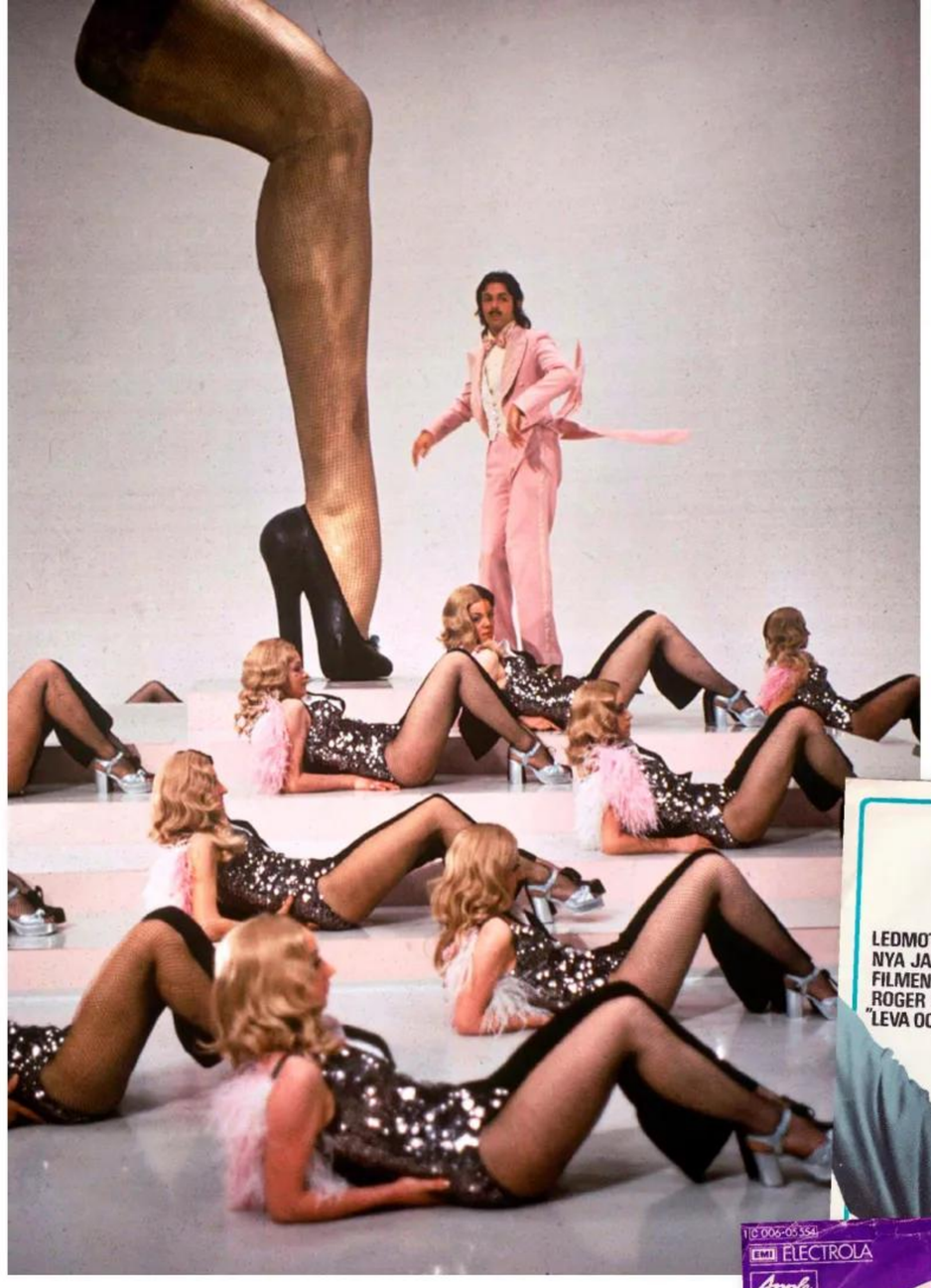
Beset in recent years by lung disease, latter decades attracted little spotlight, with Laine reliving his Wings and Moody Blues glory days on the nostalgia circuit plus the occasional album, perhaps the best but also most unassuming being his last, 2008's *The Blue Musician*, a collection of gentle guitar-led instrumentals, almost his belated sketches of Spain.

"I've always been a bit of a recluse, a mad professor," he reflected in 2010. "I like to spend a lot of time with music."

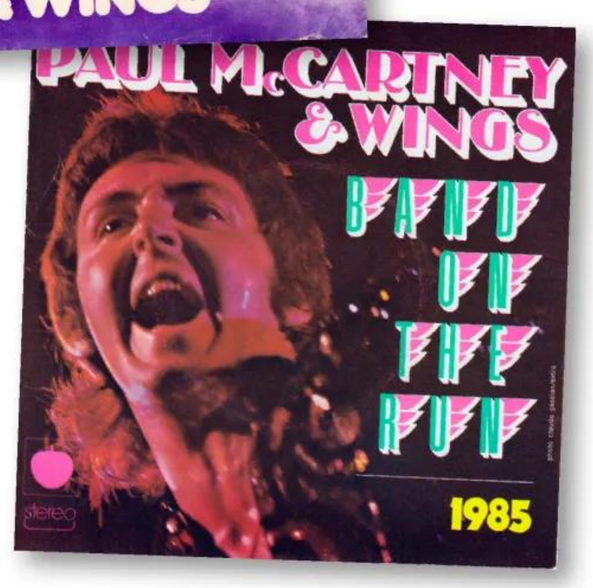
"DENNY WAS THE MOST AMBITIOUS PERSON I'D EVER MET. TO HEAR HIM TALK, JUST ABOUT ANYTHING WAS POSSIBLE."
BEV BEVAN



Blue mood: (above) Denny Laine, 1973, and (right, standing at rear) with The Moody Blues, 1966.



Wild life: sealing the deal, 1974 (from left) Linda, McCulloch, Laine, Paul, Joe English; (left) shaking a tail on 1973's James Paul McCartney ATV special.



➢ Wings came together in a straitened time in British life and it contributed to their us-against-the-world attitude. "Linda and I used to watch the News At Ten each night, religiously, but it got so bad and everything was so terrifying, from the oil crisis to the threat of nuclear war, that we felt like we had nothing to lose. You know, you're in the middle of all this and you just have to slog through it."

Wings tackled issues head on and escaped into the comforts of childhood, exemplified by the 1972 singles Give Ireland Back To The Irish, which was banned by the BBC, and Mary Had A Little Lamb, which wasn't but maybe should have been. The Irish guitarist Henry McCullough joined and Wings were looking like a proper group, though not one wowing the cognoscenti just yet.

"Getting Linda in the group, the attitude was: you're crazy," says McCartney. "We were getting lousy reviews. But I wasn't motivated by having a fabulous group. I was motivated by not wanting to leave my wife behind. We had only just married. What was I going to do, run off on the road? The Beatles weren't very good when they started out either. The Beatles never won a talent contest in their lives."

The first real sign that this was more than McCartney's folly came with the release of Live And Let Die. In October 1972, Wings were working on their second album, *Red Rose Speedway*, when Harry Saltzman and Albert Broccoli called to ask McCartney if he would write the first 'rock' Bond theme. Then in April 1973, John Lennon, wishing to sever ties with Allen Klein after his mismanagement of money raised by George Harrison's 1971 Concert For Bangladesh, swallowed some Apple-flavoured humble pie and stated: "Let's say, possibly, Paul's suspicions [about Klein] were right." You have to wonder if it all contributed to the renewed confidence *Band On The Run* would ring out with.

"It could well have had an effect because any news that I had been vindicated about Klein was good news," confirms McCartney. "But the really important thing for *Band On The Run* was moving to Scotland, bringing the kids up, my developing relationship with Linda, going through the trials and tribulations of a new band and playing all kinds of places without knowing what we were doing – until we knew what we were doing."

CRUCIALLY, THIS TIME THE MATERIAL WAS THERE. Jet, a song about the McCartneys' pet labrador, had the theatrical dazzle and immediacy of glam at its best. The Kinksy, lamenting, Picasso's Last Words came from a conversation with film star Dustin Hoffman during a holiday in Jamaica, where Hoffman was shooting Papillon. Hoffman explained how Picasso never stopped finding new ways to express himself, he would eat at midnight before disappearing into his studio until half past three in the morning, and his last words were: "Drink to me, drink to my health. You know I can't drink any more."

"I was saying all this to Paul McCartney," Hoffman remembered in the liner-notes to the 2010 reissue of *Band On The Run*. "He just started strumming, and I swear by all that's holy that he began singing this song of the story that I had just told him about Picasso. It's right under childbirth in terms of great events of my life."

Armed with the Lennon-esque rocker Let Me Roll It, the pretty Denny Laine co-write No Words and the Day In The Life-like epic Nineteen Hundred And Eighty Five, McCartney knew there was potential for a great album. And it was bound together by the title song's theme of a band with their backs against the wall. The line "If we ever get out of here" came from a remark George Harrison made during one of the interminable late-period Beatles business meetings, while McCartney being busted for pot, once in Sweden in 1972 and again in 1973 for growing marijuana plants at the farm, contributed to a mood of persecution.

"There was a fashion of the moment, a lot of it coming from the West Coast of America, of rock'n'roll groups thinking of themselves as desperadoes in cowboy hats," says McCartney. "My take on it was: We've just escaped from prison and it is us against the world. The Eagles and the Allman Brothers had that same rebellious spirit and it was finding its way into the songs. We *were* a band on the run. And it was time for us to run off to somewhere exotic."

A little too exotic, as it turned out. Scouting out cities in which EMI had recording studios, McCartney considered Rio De Janeiro and Shanghai before settling on Lagos, where President Yakubu Gowon had instituted military rule since bringing the Biafran War of Independence to a bloody end in 1970. Only on returning to Britain after six weeks in Lagos did McCartney receive a letter from EMI's chairman Len Wood, advising him not to go to Nigeria because the country was facing a cholera outbreak. It was all too much for Henry McCullough, who walked out of rehearsals at High Park Farm a week before the departure date, while Denny Seiwell ➢

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King Collection/Avalon/Getty Images

Strings attached: McCartney with *BOTR*'s orchestral arranger Tony Visconti, AIR Studios, London, 1973.

"In Those Days You Would Do ANYTHING FOR A BEATLE"

TONY VISCONTI on his orchestrations for the original *Band On The Run*. "It's a real feather in my cap," he tells WILL HODGKINSON.

Did McCartney say why he asked you to arrange *Band On The Run*? Presumably he was a fan of T. Rex?
That's exactly why he contacted me. His first questions were, "Did you write those string arrangements for T.Rex? Can you read and write music?" I said yes, of course. Then we started discussing what he wanted immediately afterwards. This was at his house near Abbey Road.

What was your impression on hearing the Lagos tapes? A lot of work to do or was it mostly there?
Paul and Denny Laine played really well, but Geoff Emerick told me that the climate in Lagos made the oxide shed, and some of the tapes were so bad you could hold them up to a light and see through them. The first thing Paul did when he got back to London was to transfer each song to 16-track tape – they'd recorded on an 8-track – with a compressor on every channel to cover up the wavering audio, so the tapes he gave to me were impeccable.

How were the sessions at AIR?
They were a marathon. I met up with Paul on Sunday afternoon, and towards the end he dropped the bomb that it had to be done by Wednesday. In those days you would do anything for a Beatle, so I agreed, and with around four or five hours' sleep I faced the huge orchestra at 10am on Monday. The idea was to start with the big groups and end on the smaller groups, like adding the two saxophones on Jet. I made it to the end on pure adrenaline. I hardly slept.

What was your feeling about the material? The first two Wings albums had been poorly received, so there was a lot riding on *Band On The Run*.
On the Sunday, Paul would only play me the parts of the songs where the orchestral instruments would come in, and he would record those bits on a separate cassette recorder. I never heard the entire songs until Wednesday because he was afraid that if I did, I would make copies and send them to friends. I would never have done that, but fair enough – he didn't know me well. My impression of what I did hear was that this was going to be an incredible album.

"THE CLIMATE IN LAGOS MADE THE OXIDE SHED. SOME OF THE TAPES WERE SO BAD, YOU COULD SEE THROUGH THEM."
TONY VISCONTI

Did you have Beatles references in your mind when doing the arrangements?
Wings was all about McCartney doing something new but he had Geoff Emerick engineering at Lagos, so there was that connection, and how could he do something entirely new? He always sounds like himself and his writing style is very evident. *Band On The Run* was a new concept, and using me instead of George Martin for the arrangements was a serious departure. I'm sure George Martin, who is one of my idols, was a little upset about that.

How do you feel about *Band On The Run*, and your part in it, today?
I'm very proud of my participation and I was honoured that Paul trusted me with a big chunk of the music. He played a few top lines that would become first violin parts and I filled in everything else, the orchestration, all of it. Oh yeah, it's a real feather in my cap.

➤ waited until the evening of take-off to resign.

"That was another motivating force in making the album," McCartney confirms. "On the eve of going to Lagos, with everything planned, Henry McCullough and Denny Seiwell went: 'Sorry man, can't make it.' Why? 'I don't know. It's a long way.' I got off the phone and, after the initial plunging into despair, I thought: I'll show you. I've written these songs and I think they are pretty good so I'll do the drumming, Denny and I will cover the guitar stuff, and with Linda on board we'll make an album you wish you had been on."

Or, as Linda told Sounds magazine in 1975, "Paul thought, 'I've got to do it. Either I give up and cut my throat or get my magic back.'"

IT WENT WRONG FROM DAY ONE. DENNY LAINE, THE Beatles' engineer Geoff Emerick and the McCartneys arrived in monsoon season to discover a flooded, half-built studio with no sound booths or acoustic screens, little in the way of working equipment, and a pressing plant on the other side of the studio door where, as the late Emerick remembered, "There was 50 or 60 people, stamping out records."

It got worse. Emerick was terrified of spiders and they were everywhere. Paul and Linda were told their children were not allowed to swim in the pool of their rented villa in upmarket Ikeja, on account of being naked. One night, as they walked back to their villa from Denny Laine's nearby, six men in a car pulled up and shouted something at Paul and Linda, with one jumping out and confronting the couple. Initially thinking the men were offering a lift, Paul said they were fine and shoved the man back in the car. That's when five others jumped out, one brandishing a knife, inspiring Linda to scream her immortal defence of Paul: "Don't touch him, he's a musician!" Unmoved at the presence of such a groovy guy, the muggers took wallets, cameras and demo tapes for *Band On The Run*.

"We were told not to walk on the streets alone, but you get told that in every dangerous country," remembers McCartney. "Being madcap rock'n'rollers, Linda and I decided, 'What do *they* know? Since it's such a lovely night, we'll walk home.' So we got robbed. We ran back to the place we were staying at and got under the blankets until morning, thinking: 'Have they followed us?' We got into the studio the next day, and the studio manager said: 'You're lucky you're white. If you were black they would have killed you because they would worry that you would recognise them.' So yeah, we lost the tapes, but because we had been doing them so recently I remembered them."

Time for Geoff Emerick to come into his own, just as he had as a 20-year-old back in 1966, when John Lennon told him he wanted to sound like the Dalai Lama singing from a mountaintop for Tomorrow Never Knows; Emerick had put Lennon's voice through a revolving Leslie speaker to give it an ancient, disembodied quality.

"Geoff was one of the all-time great engineers," declares McCartney. "It was Geoff who made a little mistake during the Beatles sessions and put the tape on backwards [on Rain], then worked out how to do a backwards solo [for I'm Only Sleeping]. George would play a guitar solo that starts with a big flourish and gets less and less flourishing until you get to the end, which is the beginning. It was mind-bending, it kept us interested, and Geoff brought all of that – being a free spirit, but also a bit of a mathematician – to Wings."

The legendary Nigerian musician Fela Kuti showed up at the studio, only to later conduct an interview in which he claimed McCartney was 'stealing the black man's music'. Ginger Baker, fresh out of Cream, had his own studio in Lagos and was offended that McCartney hadn't asked to use it, so Wings recorded Picasso's Last Words there and got Baker to add a bit of percussion. One day in the EMI studio, McCartney found that he was struggling to breathe. He went outside to take some fresh air and promptly fell on the ground.

"I collapsed from too much smoking, but it could have been stress. Who knows?" McCartney asks himself. "Linda thought I had died. They rushed me to a doctor and I remember this nightmare of going through a Lagos market, noise everywhere, thinking: Bloody

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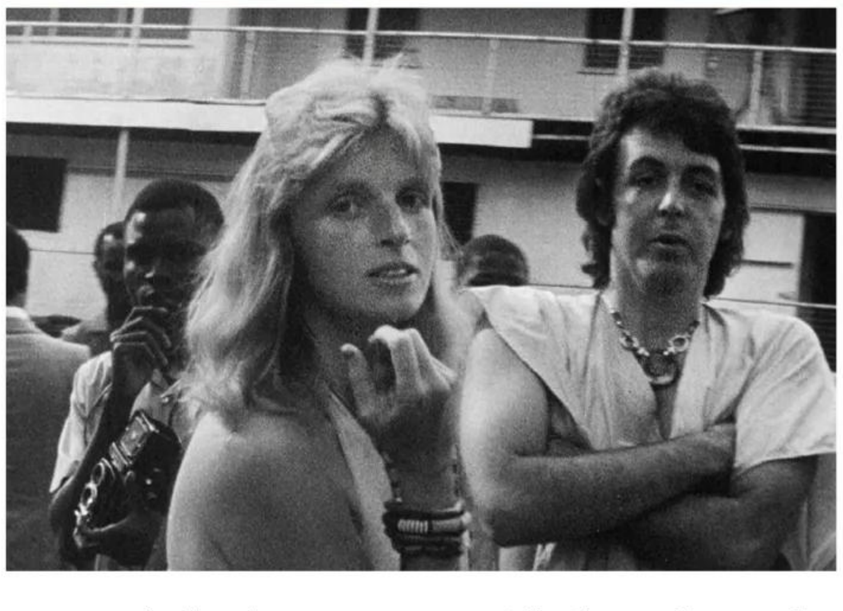
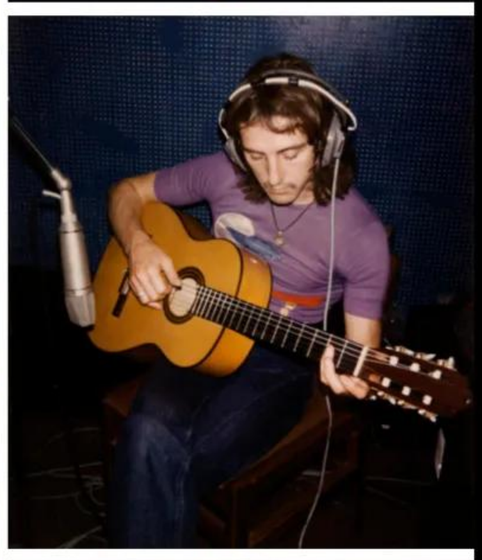
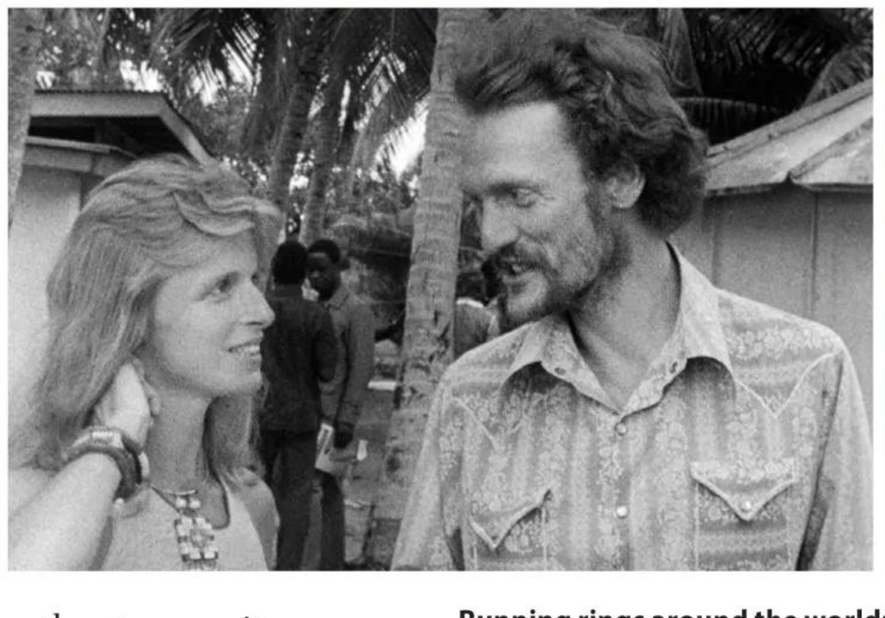




"Even Michael Jackson said to Paul, 'Who's singing the harmonies there?' 'That's Denny and Linda.' There was a sound there that can't be mimicked." **DENNY LAINE**

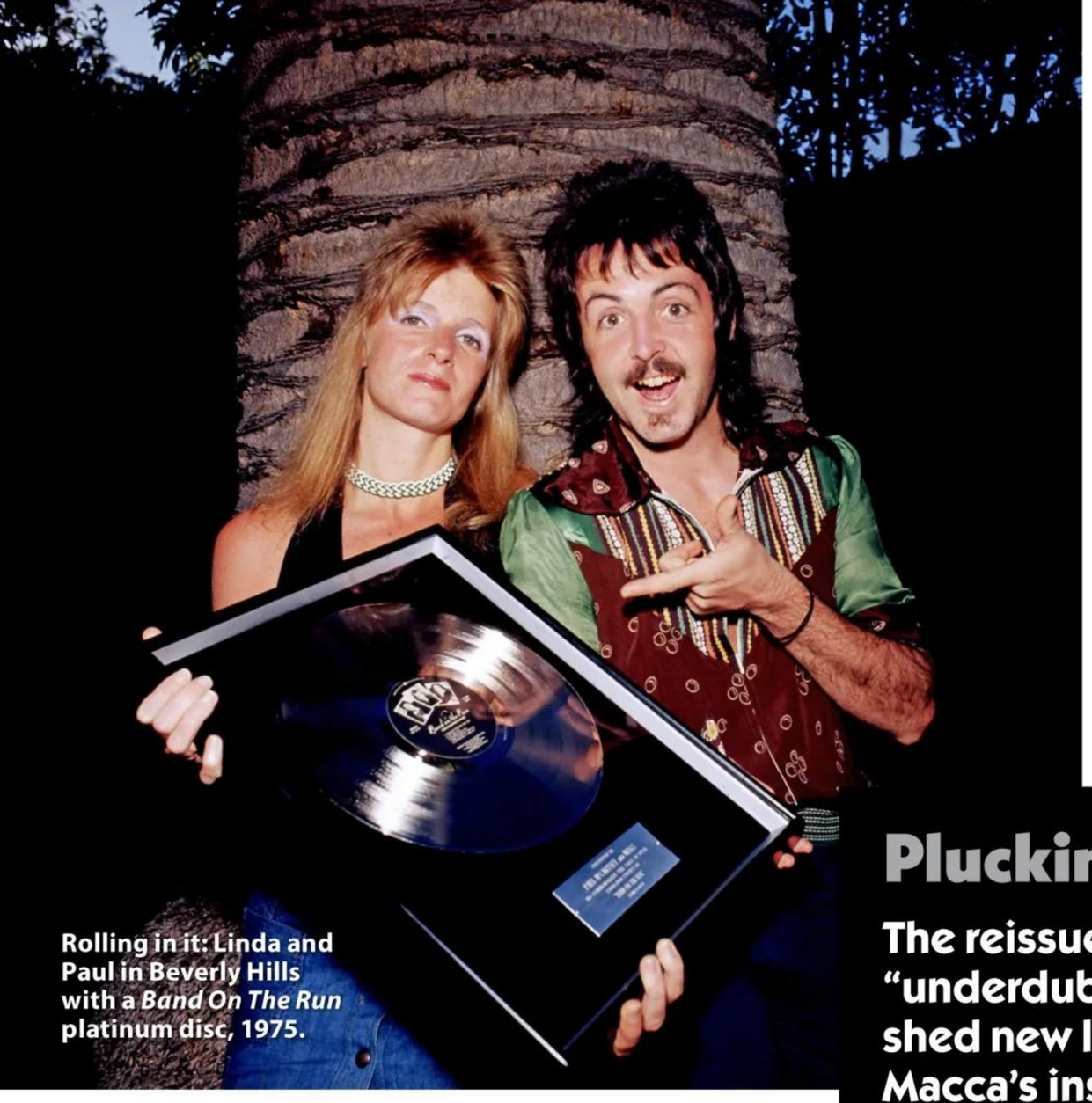


hell, what is going on? The heat, the smoking, the stress… it compounded. What could we do? Probably anyone sensible would say we should go home, but then a sensible producer would have told us to play the tape forwards, so we went back into the studio the next day. Smoked a bit less, probably."

FINISHING OFF THE ALBUM AT GEORGE MARTIN'S AIR studios in London, McCartney engaged his Merseybeat contemporary Howie Casey on saxophone and the Nigerian Afro-rock drummer Remi Kabaka, who contributed to Bluebird. Bowie/T.Rex producer Tony Visconti was given three days to add the orchestral arrangements. Dynamic, sophisticated, sympathetic, they remain a big part of the album's enduring richness.

Finally came the shoot for the cover art at Osterley Park in west London, where Clement Freud, Christopher Lee, Michael Parkinson, Kenny Lynch, James Coburn and John Conteh joined ➢

Running rings around the world: (anti-clockwise from main) Linda, Paul and Denny lay down vocal harmonies, AIR Studios, London, November 21, 1973; Paul with Fela Kuti (right) and friend in the EMI studio, Lagos, Nigeria, September 1973; Paul and Denny confer; Paul gives the drummer some; Heather McCartney (front) with sister Stella, Wings assistant Trevor Jones and Denny Laine taking the local Lagos bus; Linda and Paul out and about in Lagos; Linda and Ginger Baker; behind the scenes at the *BOTR* cover shoot with (from left) Michael Parkinson, Christopher Lee, John Conteh, James Coburn, Paul, Laine and Clement Freud; Paul channels Billy Preston; Remi Kabaka adds percussion at EMI Lagos; Geoff Emerick works magic in Lagos; Paul shreds; Denny deftly lilts.



Rolling in it: Linda and Paul in Beverly Hills with a *Band On The Run* platinum disc, 1975.

"The success of *Band On The Run* gave us all confidence, especially Linda. She was now a fully-fledged member of the band." PAUL McCARTNEY

two million!'" remembers McCartney, on the excitement of a reunion. "Yeah, might be nice… But we knew it was never going to happen."

In the event, Wings' 10-year life span matched roughly that of The Beatles', coming to an end in 1981 after Denny Laine, already feeling he wasn't being adequately compensated, was upset at the loss of touring income after McCartney's arrest – again for possession of marijuana – in Japan.

"Getting busted in Japan certainly had something to do with it, but by then Wings had run its course and I was getting a little bit disillusioned," says McCartney. "Being a maniac, I was waiting for the moment the group finished so I could say: Wings Fold. And we folded. That's all that happened."

IN 2024, McCARTNEY IS RETURNING to *Band On The Run*, releasing the original album in remastered form alongside an 'underdubbed' edition, shorn of Visconti's orchestrations. But why? His legendary perseverance, which anyone who saw Peter Jackson's Get Back documentaries will confirm, has a lot to do with it.

"Persevering is very important to me," he states, as if we didn't already know. "Now And Then was like that. A lot of people didn't want to bother with it, but my feeling was that there remained something I was itching to finish and it is the same with this. When you're working on a record you do an early mix, and there are kids working in my office who said they loved the tracks without the orchestra and so on. These are the recordings before we added overdubs, so we'll call them the underdubs. Hopefully it is just another way of looking at the record."

It concludes the journey of an album that is particularly dear to McCartney's heart, not just for helping him escape the tangled web of The Beatles but also because it came at a time when he was, it seems, happy for the first time in years. And McCartney's journey matched that of British life itself, with the carefree adolescence of the '60s giving way to the sombre adulthood of the '70s.

"That was the plan," concludes McCartney. "We'll start from rock bottom, the kids will come with us, we'll be a family and we'll go through the tribulations together – I suppose because we couldn't think of anything else to do. And we did it. Like Dora The Explorer."

Or in the words of Charles Shaar Murray, New Musical Express, January 19, 1974: "*Band On The Run* is a great album. If anybody ever puts down McCartney in your presence, bust him in the snoot and play him this. He will thank you for it afterwards." Ⓜ

Plucking GREAT

The reissued *BOTR*'s "underdubbed" tracks shed new light on Macca's instinctive genius, says DANNY ECCLESTON.

Paul McCartney & Wings
★★★★★
Band On The Run (50th Anniversary Edition)
(Capitol, CD/LP)

CALL IT THE Paradox of Paul. Often thought of as the 'slick one' in The Beatles, closer inspection of his best work often reveals what's charmingly impromptu, even lo-fi. *McCartney I* and *II* are the paradigms, but even on *Band On The Run* – superficially among his most 'crafted' records – there's evidence of a musical mind moving too fast to bother with spit and polish.

The works-in-progress disc of this handsome reissue package gives an even starker impression of a man rummaging joyfully through the studio toy box, now slapping down an instinctively lively drum beat, now jumping on a synth he's only just plugged in, and rolling with it. As in the case of *Revolver*'s Got To Get You Into My Life, an early Jet's fuzz guitar is a place-holder for the brass that would be added to the final version. Minus Tony Visconti's epic orchestration on the title track, there's more emphasis on oddities like the Stylophone-esque melody line around 1:30. The early Picasso's Last Words (Drink To Me) is more than ever a worksheet for multiple songs and directions, complete with that snatch of Jet, and the incomprehensible drum fill a minute in. Chaos and creation, hand in hand.

What cannot be revealed, however, is what's always been obvious – namely, McCartney's sturdiest collection of vocal melodies since The Beatles. Charming, wistful (Mamunia) and nostalgic (on No Words, someone – maybe Denny Laine – sounds half-John, half-George), they slide and soar, leaping into genius key changes on Jet, boogie-ing down on Helen Wheels (included, as it was originally on the US release), tied to an idea, on Let Me Roll It, that seems ultimate McCartney. Rolling your heart to a loved one? How does that work? Instinctively again, it just *does*.

James Fortune

◄ the McCartneys and Laine to make up the world's most unlikely gang of prison escapees, and Wings were reborn. *Band On The Run* went to Number 1 in the UK and US, collected two Grammys, and turned Wings into an arena rock phenomenon. Even John Lennon conceded that it was a great album. For the first time, McCartney's new band was allowed to exist without being judged against the legacy of his old one.

"I always said I wouldn't do Beatles songs until we established Wings," says McCartney. "That was a mantra and I kept to it. Then I realised they were good songs and I liked singing them, so I felt it was time to gradually introduce Beatles songs into sets made up mostly of Wings stuff. The success of *Band On The Run* gave us all confidence, especially Linda. She was now a fully-fledged member of the band, and instead of being made fun of because of her lack of expertise, she was getting respected. Elton John said he loved the sound of her harmonies. That was a real boost for her."

There was some kind of symmetry, divine or otherwise, in *Band On The Run* coming out in the same year as The Beatles' Red and Blue compilations. "The covers of those albums was us saying: That's it, we're done, we've come full circle," says McCartney, referencing the famous photographs of the Fabs, clean-cut in 1963 and hairy in 1969, looking down from the stairwell of EMI House in Marylebone, London. On March 28, 1974, just under a year after the Red and Blue albums were released, Paul and Linda walked into Burbank Studios in Los Angeles where Harry Nilsson was working on *Pussy Cats*. Also in the studio was John Lennon. The two former Beatles jammed together for the first time since *Abbey Road*. It would also be the last time.

"All these offers came. 'We'll give you

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

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"She captures the wild vacillations of falling in and out of something that's possibly good and potentially terrible."

GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN SWOONS TO BRITTANY HOWARD. ALBUMS P84.

War and peace

Idles were Brit alt-rock's shock troops in combat against Brexit-era prejudices. Now they're out to wage heavy peace. By **Andrew Perry**. Illustration by **Justin Metz**.

Idles

★★★★

Tangk

PARTISAN. CD/DL/LP

"Idles have sought other means beyond brute force – the art of persuasion."

IN ONE of the most thought-provoking entries in Aesop's Fables, the North Wind and the Sun vie to prove themselves the stronger by attempting to strip a traveller of his clothing. Going first, the wind's "violent gusts" only prompt the wayfarer to wrap his cloak more tightly around himself, and soon to put on another layer. Next up, the sun's methods are more effective, its moderate rays enticing the fellow to shed his coat and then, at full blaze, to skinny-dip in a nearby river.

This much-referenced tale struck a deep chord with Idles' firebrand frontman Joe Talbot. Perhaps reading Aesop to his daughter, Frida, now aged four, during his cogitations before devising the band's fifth LP, he took on board its moral: "very often," runs the text, "persuasion is more effective than force".

It would be risible to suggest that Idles have thus far huffed and puffed, and got nowhere. Starting with 2017's *Brutalism*, where Talbot exorcised the agony of six years as primary carer for his stroke-afflicted mother and her passing during the album's gestation, the Bristolian post-punk unit have emerged as the most powerfully connective contemporary British alt-rock band.

The following year's *Joy As An Act Of Resistance* and 2020's chart-topping *Ultra Mono* further honed their propulsive, post-punk inner machinery, amid unflinching themes: on the former, these ranged from toxic masculinity, racism and Brexit folly through to the still-birth of Joe's first daughter; the latter was a mid-therapy purgative blitz in a quest for healed selfhood.

While those early LPs took Idles into the mosh-pit super league, they weren't for everybody. To more sensitive ears, they could seem overbearingly muscular in their full-beard shoutiness – a hostile environment, there for all the nasty things in life like a blocked drain, or a broken, xenophobic nation.

They've since indeed sought other means beyond brute force – the art of persuasion. Barely a year after *Ultra Mono* came *Crawler*, where Talbot zeroed in on his own 15-year cycle of addiction amid differing soundscapes. That LP's now best seen as transitional, en route to this fifth chapter in Idles' saga, where there's a good deal more to get excited about, and, to borrow its chief buzzword, to love.

Their quest for change was detectable in *Tangk*'s earliest manoeuvres: for initial wood-shedding, guitarist and sonic mastermind Mark Bowen circled back to Nigel Godrich, who'd captured Idles' performative tornado for his From The Basement series, and whose work on Radiohead's *Kid A/Amnesiac* established him as an avatar of artistic transformation.

As per title, Idea01 dates from the first Godrich-Bowen session at the producer's Brixton facility in October 2022, its bass-drum heartbeat, Satie-esque slo-mo piano and encroaching interference providing a backdrop for Talbot's litany of childhood traumas salvaged from his unconscious – still psychic shock-and-awe, but couched in a more seductive soundscape.

Second track, Gift Horse, is more the Idles we know and headbang to: rhythm section Jon Beavis (drums), Adam Devonshire (bass) and Lee Kiernan (guitar) strike a thundering groove, punctuated by Bowen's six-string clanks (hence the album title), and self-lionised in the accompanying rhymes: "Sinew exploding from chrome hooves/Where we're going we don't need glue/…Watch my steed go far/Look at him go!"

The aural purpose of *Tangk* is surely to present a more balanced picture of highs and lows, equine gallops and deep-diving meditations, with outbreaks of proper singing by Talbot, and production from Bowen and US hip-hop's Kenny Beats coherently aligning the tough with the introspective. At track four, Roy's fragile strike at immortality ("I'm never gonna die/Ooh, take the posers instead") is beautifully voiced over rolling drums and bass thrums, its arpeggiated bridge and erupting "baby-baby" chorus as bruised and emotive as anything you'll hear in 2024.

Even closer to the bone, A Gospel is a nakedly heartbroken ballad (Talbot's no longer with Frida's mother), its drumless rhythm kept by piano chords and pizzicato plucked violin. "Delete my number," runs one achingly crooned verse, "I'm no more/Ignore my eyes, babe, they're just sore."

Happily, Talbot is regenerating via the joys of parenting. In Gift Horse's second half, he eulogises his daughter's precocious wisdom ("My baby, she's so raw/…Ask us to kneel and bow to the floor/She say no and ask what for") before declaring her sovereignty over his dominion. "Fuck the king!" he barks. "He ain't the king – she's the king!"

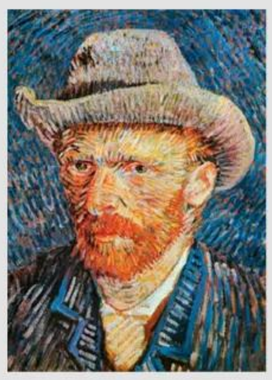
Similar anti-monarchist themes run through another brittle beauty, Grace, while the brooding finale, Monolith, proclaims his recovery both from addiction and romantic upheaval with the clinching realisation, "I've found myself my own king".

If, post-coronation, Charles III takes a battering here, the vibes are otherwise far-reachingly amorous. Amongst the full-throttle bangers, Dancer is fabulously carnal in its imprecations, Talbot's voice gruff and gnarly like Wu-Tang clansman Method Man around raunchy lines like, "My breath moves your hair". As well as a private-dancing scenario, the chorus – "I give myself to you/As long as you move/On the floor" – implies another shapes-throwing transaction, between stage and mosh pit. This year and beyond, Talbot will have to give often: it's a killer tune, auspiciously featuring LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy and Nancy Whang in a minor backing-vocals role.

Also lively, Hall & Oates' title nods surely to that duo's 1983 hit, Family Man, as Talbot bigs up his dad ("I loved my man from the very start/He turned forgiveness into an art") and his brother, whereas Jungle reveals the depths Idles' leader plumbed as an addict ("I found myself under a Scotsman's boot" etc), his horror at his former self palpable in the anguished refrain: "Save me from me/I'm found, I'm found, I'm found!"

That Talbot, now 39, feels thankful to have emerged with his life is stirringly evoked in the album's beating heart, Gratitude, where, Scrooge-like, he envisions his own funeral if he'd not sobered up, sparsely attended by "10 people that might cry". His response: "I hold my hand up and say/That gratitude cuts through my veins".

All told, *Tangk* is still hardly for the faint-hearted pop-picker, but it categorically repositions its makers as contenders in the biggest arena, as tuneful, approachable geezers capable of love, and sharing it with the world. Its aim is true, uplifting and, yes, mighty persuasive.



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BACK STORY: VAN GO!

- Idles recorded *Tangk* in three weeks in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence in southern France, where painter Vincent Van Gogh (above) spent some of his final days. "The studio's a stunning place," says Joe Talbot, "with two control rooms. I was in one recording all the vocals, and Bowen and the rest were in the other. I'd written two verses in advance, so basically all the lyrics were written in two weeks at the mike, in the moment, and it was 99 per cent successful. It was magic, very combustive."

JOE SPEAKS! TALBOT ON CLIMBING HILLS, BALLET DANCERS AND THE JOY OF 'FREUDENFREUDE'.

ALL
STOCK
REDUCTD
CLOSIN
DOW

Idles' Joe Talbot: "the most powerful fucking human beings on earth are ballet dancers."

"The boring get bored."

Idles' Joe Talbot talks to Andrew Perry.

The beginnings of *Tangk* involved Nigel Godrich. Were Idles seeking their *Kid A* moment?

"Fuck, yeah. We came from the school of Nigel Godrich. *Kid A* is one of my favourite albums. To work hard as an artist, you have to challenge yourself, make yourself uncomfortable, look at the ugly parts and make them beautiful, by connecting to the world, for you, not for anyone else. As my mum always said, 'the boring get bored.'"

This time, you're singing, more than rapping or raging.

"I have sung before, but I wasn't confident. If you listen back to Slow Savage on *Brutalism*, and other slow ones before, I'm fighting it by trying to be aggressive behind it, not allowing myself to be completely tender, like I'm scared there's a lack of power in being graceful. Of course, that's bullshit. The most powerful fucking human beings on earth are ballet dancers, because it takes strength to move slowly and open yourself up to the world."

On Grace, you sing, "No god, no king/I said love is the thing". Is that your mantra for 2024?

"Yeah, kind of. The coronation was happening, and it was pissing me off. Because as an anti-monarchist, I don't like occupying other countries, an unelected leader, the House Of Lords… As soon as you have a kid, those beliefs become amplified with a sense of severe protection. It just highlights the dangerous, apathetic stance we have on such oppressive fucking systems within our country, and I want to talk about that through love – not anger, not hate, not disdain. Just: my daughter's my king, he's not my king. Tell me different! Prove to me different! You can't."

On POP POP POP, you coin the term 'freudenfreude', taking pleasure in other people's pleasure…

"I didn't come up with it. I saw it on one of those internet feeds, about words that should be invented but haven't been yet. It was someone taking *schadenfreude*, which is quite a negative part of human nature, giving it a positive slant. There's so much *schadenfreude* on social media, and that's because the internet feels like a window into the world, but it's actually a cell door. So, 'freudenfreude' is a beautiful notion. Even the coining of it is a beautiful act; someone going, 'Hold on, what about parenthood? What about seeing your friends do something sick? What about going to see your favourite band, being in a crowd and enjoying everybody else's energy?' That's a cool thing."

Where can Idles go from here?

"We're going to a place of peace. We're going to find our rhythm, and we're going to really challenge ourselves. That place of uncomfortable purpose is where we want to be, where, if it's easy, it's probably not good enough. That's a beautiful place to be, because you get up in the morning, and you've got a hill to climb. Fuck me, the amount of people out there who are desperate for that hill! We're just going to keep climbing it."

Green Day

★★★★

Saviors

REPRISE. CD/DL/LP/MC

The pop-punk reliables act their age even while playing like kids.

Can a canonical punk trio stay interesting after its singer breaks 30, 40, even 50? That is the question Billie Joe Armstrong – the Green Day leader, now 51, whose sneer became world-famous at 22 – has been answering in assorted ways for three decades, whether through agitprop smashes or Norah Jones collaborations. Green Day are admirably assured, honest, and funny on *Saviors*, their fourteenth LP. They often sound like their adolescent pop-punk selves but satisfyingly write like adults, confronting American demons, including mass shootings and rampant inequality, and personal ones, like depressive spells and sobriety struggles. Reuniting with producer Rob Cavallo, Green Day find variety within these 15 tracks, conjuring Cheap Trick on Corvette Summer and even the lighters-up balladry of hair metal on Father To A Son. "We all die young someday," Armstrong croons during the closer, smartly dismissing age while acknowledging that it's steadily coming for all of us.

Grayson Haver Currin

Anna Calvi

★★★★

Peaky Blinders: Seasons 5 & 6 (Original Score)

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Accomplished soundtrack to BBC drama elevates the lowlife.

The disconnect between Peaky Blinders' peculiar pop-cultural role – day-at-the-races cosplay, threatening 'banter' – and its black-arts soundtrack is striking. It's hard to imagine singer-songwriter Anna Calvi ever smashing a pint glass and yelling "Peaky Fuckin' Blinders!"; her score for the final two series of Steven Knight's gangster drama is instead a sensitive response to all the show's gathering storms. She covers totemic theme song Red Right Hand by stripping back Nick Cave's grand guignol to a less theatrical menace, a close-up, claustrophobic approach echoed in these tracks' percussive heavy breathing, strung-out guitar and thrumming piano. The shadow of fellow Peaky Blinders associate P.J. Harvey, meanwhile, falls heavy over Tommy's Plan and You're Not God. Seeping dread, incipient violence and whispers of the occult: the soundworld Calvi and her season six collaborator Nick Launay generate ensures all the show's devils are here.

Victoria Segal

J Mascis

★★★★

What Do We Do Now

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP

"J goes electric" shock; Dinosaur Jr guitarist's fifth solo LP.

For someone who hates writing lyrics, J Mascis sure knows the power of simple words. Recorded in the last days of lockdown, his fifth solo LP is a study in the confused emotions that have been universal this decade. From the title track to single Can't Believe We're Here and the country-tinged I Can't Find You and You Don't Understand Me, or the spectre of a wasteland on Old Friends, it's an LP of insight and empathy, a hand on the shoulder that says: "Yeah, me too." The most notable feature, however, is that Mascis has plugged in: though acoustic guitars shape the songs throughout, this is his first solo LP to feature full drum kit and the sort of solos you expect from Dinosaur Jr. Though he says he doesn't know why he did it, his instinct was on the money.

David Hutcheon

Hank Wangford & Noel Dashwood

★★★★

Promises, Promises

$INCERE $OUNDS. CD/DL/LP

Father of Brit C&W and dobro folkie's debut country album.

Wangford, as any Brit who's wept into their beer knows, is a beloved founding father of UK country music; Dashwood is an English folkie and a dab hand at the dobro. They started playing together a few years back then went into the studio, emerging with an LP as spare and honest as its 11 fine songs. For the most part it's simply Wangford's voice and guitar (and occasional uke) and Dashwood's evocative dobro and unaffected harmony. There's a timeless feel; only the lyrics of Jump In The River and Oil (Black Gold) pin it in the 2020s. Wangford has old country's light-hearted despair down to an art (Way Of The World's sweet, Jimmie Rodgers-y insouciance); Gram Parsons-esque heartbreak too (Let Her Go). The LP's named after the woebegone waltz-time closer, but it's the fifth song that sums it up: Simple Pleasures.

Sylvie Simmons

Lee 'Scratch' Perry

★★★★

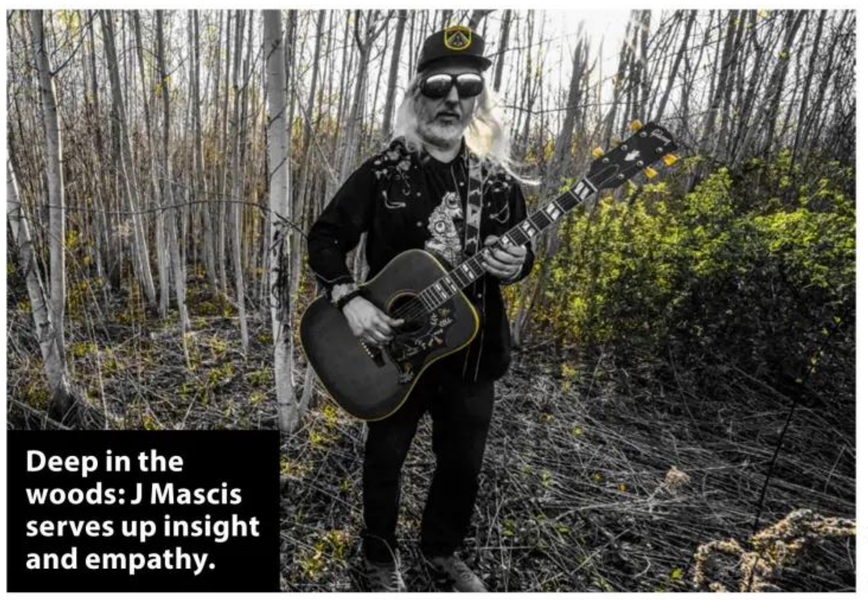
King Perry

FALSE IDOLS/!K7. CD/DL/LP

Perry's fourth and final collaborative LP with producer Daniel Boyle.

While the late Upsetter's reputation rests on his visionary '70s productions, for the ensuing four-plus decades he largely stepped back from the console to work as an artist, in-the-moment rapper and in-studio avatar. At best, he'd leave the heavy lifting to the Mad Professor or On-U's Adrian Sherwood, who sculpted 2019's valedictory highlights *Rainford/Heavy Rain*. Amongst myriad other team-ups, Perry's outings with Boyle have slipped by undervalued, especially 2018's *Black Album*, recorded at Abbey Road's Studio Two (birthplace of The Beatles' *White Album*, geddit?). Here, Boyle, who generally works at his Rolling Lion facility in Puglia, strikes a crisp spacious groove somewhere between dubstep and '90s digi-dub, for Perry to voice croakily alongside co-vocalists including Greentea Peng, Shaun Ryder and False Idols boss Tricky, who featured Scratch on 2021's *Lonely Guest* and reciprocally mutters on the now-extra-resonant Future Of My Music. For Scratch's prodigious legacy, that future's surely exceptionally bright.

Andrew Perry



Deep in the woods: J Mascis serves up insight and empathy.

Tom Ham

Grin and bear it: The Smile's – (from left) Tom Skinner, Jonny Greenwood, Thom Yorke – second LP is one for the 'heads'.

Full beam

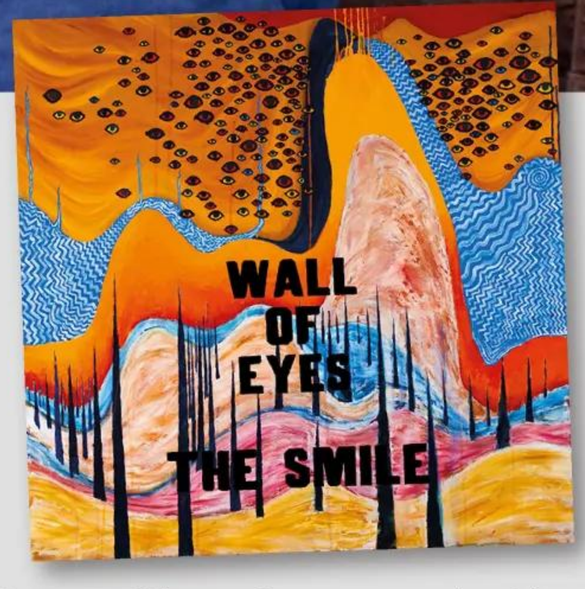
Thom Yorke, Jonny Greenwood and Tom Skinner's trio venture further out there. By **Tom Doyle**.

The Smile

★★★★

Wall Of Eyes

XL RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP



UPON THEIR arrival in 2021, it was clear that The Smile weren't just a Radiohead side-project. Their debut album, *A Light For Attracting Attention*, was way too good for a start, with many of the tracks (Pana-Vision, Speech Bubbles, the beautiful Free In The Knowledge) stylistically segueing from the misty moods of *A Moon Shaped Pool*.

Wall Of Eyes finds them moving further into their proggier side. Recorded at an undisclosed location in Oxford, and at Abbey Road, it involves a change of producer from Nigel Godrich (presumably busy overseeing the new Idles album) to Sam Petts-Davies (who worked with Yorke on his 2018 Suspiria soundtrack) but retains the inventive arranging skills of Hugh Brunt conducting the London Contemporary Orchestra.

The result sounds more live-captured – as opposed to layered – than tastefully orchestrated, and many of the tracks feature multi-movements. In what sounds like a *Discipline*-era King Crimson diptych, Read The Room shifts from Greenwood's Fripp-like fractured arpeggios, over Skinner's simpatico loping beat, picking up pace into a double-time groove, while the six-minute-long Under Our Pillows phases from math rock to motorik to ambient.

The eight-minute Bending Hectic, meanwhile, returns to the old Yorke lyrical preoccupation (from Airbag to Killer Cars) of road crashes. Premiered during The Smile's performance at the Montreux Jazz Festival in the summer of 2022, it utilises Greenwood's string-bending riff to evoke the curving Italian mountain pass upon which Yorke is driving in a 1960s convertible before fatalistically "letting go of the wheel". A massed strings glissando appears, clearly referring to A Day In The Life, before Yorke and Greenwood thunder into their epic rockiest moment since The Bends, as the singer attempts to reverse gravity and regain control.

As ever, Yorke's lyrics are impressionistic and elliptical. The paranoid bossa nova of the title track appears to refer to both surveillance and projected public image ("Is that still you with the hollow eyes?"). Friend Of A Friend, a piano-rooted cousin of Radiohead's The Daily Mail, albeit jazzier and more vaguely Beatles-esque, sounds like it might concern cronyism ("All of that money…where did it go?") and even fame and the weight of expectation ("I guess I'll stay/At least 'til the disappointed have eaten themselves away").

All in all, less immediate and traditionally melodic than *A Light…*, *Wall Of Eyes* is one for the heads, revealing its many charms and details only upon repeated listens. At eight tracks, it feels a tad slighter than its predecessor, but similarly shouldn't be mistaken for an extra-curricular indulgence. Let us not forget that it's been eight years – the entire recording life span of The Beatles – since *A Moon Shaped Pool*. Until Radiohead return, or even if they never regroup, The Smile will do just nicely.

Frank Lebon

Heart on sleeve, dog on lap: Brittany Howard knows no bounds.

New tricks

After a five-year wait, the former Shake returns with more flexibility and focus. By Grayson Haver Currin.

Brittany Howard

★★★★

What Now

ISLAND. CD/DL/LP

DURING A nine-minute stretch on the back half of *What Now*, the compulsive second solo album from Brittany Howard, the former Alabama Shake showcases just how boundless her music can be. She first saunters above a Moroder disco pulse for Prove It To You, swirling alongside blown-out drums and fluorescent call-and-response keys as she pledges her devotion like Donna Summer in the summer of '77. But she sinks deeply into Samson just a track later, her romantic confusion reflected back at her by the sighing trumpets and dizzying keys of a could-have-been *On The Corner* outtake. Howard commands in both roles with a power that one is tempted to call bravery, save for the way it suggests she's doing this for someone else. Instead, *What Now* captures Howard's joy – the joy that she finds in singing, in flitting through different forms, and in saying the difficult bits through brilliant song.

A dozen years have passed since the Alabama Shakes shot like a soulful rocket into the stratosphere, their ecstatic revivalism as real and worn-in as a secondhand shirt. It was clear on their second album, *Sound & Color*, that the burgeoning vision was bigger and that the trio's regional vintage could not contain Howard long. After she stalled while writing the third record, she pivoted to a kaleidoscopic solo debut, 2019's *Jaime*. The jangling jubilance of Stay High was the obvious anchor, but Howard also moved among D'Angelo worship, Pentecostal volume, and New Order slow burns.

What Now is no less discursive, plundering so many styles that it might instead be called What Next. But working with co-producer Shawn Everett in a series of top-tier Nashville hubs, Howard makes it cohere not only through the prayer bowls that clang and drone between tracks but also through the way she captures the wild vacillations of falling in and out of something that's possibly good and potentially terrible. Where the strutting and mighty title track is a get-lost missive, the hiccupping but hard-hitting Red Flags proclaims that real infatuation means overlooking portents, for better or worse. An unapologetic slab of futuristic funk, Another Day is a self-confident anthem fit for a Pride fête. The gentle-as-a-caress To Be Still begs to be planted like a seed, to bloom slowly in place. If there is a message about messy love that you need to send, Howard can be your telegraph.

What Now is ultimately about the way that relationships control us or that we, in turn, can control them. She works to shake off the past during Power To Undo, a mighty bit of Paisley Park pop, swearing that her sadness won't lord over her life above guitars that shake and jerk like an anxious hand. But that guard comes down during Every Color In Blue, an unexpected *In Rainbows* call-back that finds her trying and sometimes failing not to wallow in what's left behind. It is a beautiful and complicated song for a beautiful and complicated subject – how to make your heart available without having it hurt beyond repair.

Alysse Gafkjen

Grandaddy

★★★★

Blu Wav

DANGERBIRD. CD/DL/LP

Jason Lytle's first out-and-out country LP.

Though only partly autobiographical, Grandaddy's first LP in six years is a break-up record of sorts. That's *Blu* as in feeling blue, then, hence seven of these 13 songs are disconsolate waltzes laced with forlorn pedal steel, actual coyote calls, and a trippy measure of Spiritualized's cosmic ruination. The singular, downtempo mood is widescreen and desolately pretty, the songs' bruised protagonist retreating to a waterfall in East Yosemite, or watching his ex "and some dude knockin' back the shots" while sat in his car outside (Jukebox App). "Some things just weren't meant to fly," reflects Lytle elsewhere amid the heavenly melancholy of On A Train Or Bus, while country's affinity with black humour steers You're Going To Be Fine And I'm Going To Hell. For all the heartache, *Blu Wav* is surprisingly uplifting, transcendent, even. No mean feat.

James McNair

Kevin Richard Martin

★★★★

Black

BANDCAMP. DL

Electronic eulogy to the late Amy Winehouse from the Bug/King Midas Sound industrial sound architect.

"*Black* is a heartfelt memorial," writes Kevin Martin on his Bandcamp page, "an album of predominantly beatless ambience possessed by the ghost of *Back To Black*." Although never a fan of the late singer during her lifetime ("I never cared for Mark Ronson's poptastic productions," he writes), there was something about Amy Winehouse's tragic death that struck a chord with Martin, and caused him to listen again to her beautiful world-weary voice and reassess "the scale of her greatness". Utilising slow dub, ambient jazz ghosts and choirs of blurred drone, *Black* is a kind of brooding threnody, a sonic companion-piece to Asif Kapadia's 2015 Winehouse documentary that captures in dark sound the same ineffable, all-pervasive mood of melancholy narcotic sadness that runs through that film. And, like Kapadia's film, *Black* never feels exploitative or maudlin, but heartfelt, empathetic and caring.

Andrew Male

John Bramwell

★★★★

The Light Fantastic

TOWNSEND. CD/DL/LP

Former I Am Kloot frontman's second solo LP.

It was unlikely that the 2017 break-up of eternal Manchester bridesmaids I Am Kloot was going to be the last we heard of band leader John Bramwell, and now, two solos LPs in and pushing 60, his much-lauded songwriting is anything but diminished. With songs mostly written around early-morning recollections of the night before's dreams, during the months after losing both his parents, mortality looms large on *The Light Fantastic*. The man once known as Johnny Dangerously doesn't really 'do' morbid, however, the upbeat melodies and close harmony backing vocals blowing off most of the existential angst on tracks such as A World Full Of Flowers and 2019 single I Am The Sky, the gently wafting Nobody Left But You and even the darker, more forbidding The Element Of Truth. Wonderfully grown-up pop music delivered by an adept songwriter.

Andy Fyfe

Chelsea Wolfe

★★★

She Reaches Out To She Reaches Out To She

LOMA VISTA. CD/DL/LP

Dark-side singer-songwriter stretches herself on Dave Sitek-produced seventh album.

"This world is not designed for us," hisses Chelsea Wolfe on Whispers In The Echo Chamber, the opening track on *She Reaches Out To She Reaches Out To She*. Since her 2010 debut *The Grime And The Glow*, the LA-based singer-songwriter has fought to forge spaces that will hold her unconventional form, using folk, industrial and metal as tools to cut and excavate. While she dials down both the goth-folk of 2019's *Birth Of Violence* and her Cthulhu-core electronics here, there are still spasms of noise and glitch. Eyes Like Nightshade starts with a mangled church bell clatter; Place In The Sun's trip-hop torch song is aerosolised into static; late-period Bad Seeds texturing ripples throughout. She's still drawn to the edges like a death's-head moth to an inferno, but once you are in Wolfe's distinctive headspace, it's easy to believe they are her comfort zone, and maybe even yours.

Victoria Segal

His Lordship

★★★★

His Lordship

PSYCHONAUT SOUNDS/PIAS. CD/DL/LP

Post-millennial Pretenders guitarist garage-rocks out.

North Londoner James Walbourne has been British rock'n'roll's great hope for 20-odd years now; here, he finally steps out front to fill the ever-deepening void in UK ramalama ding-dong. After last year's self-explanatory Play Rock'N'Roll Volume One EP charted the beginnings of his duo alongside Danish drummer Kris Sonne in covering pioneers like Link Wray and Billy Lee Riley, this self-composed debut LP roams beyond rock's 1950s launchpad. The pair variously detonate breathless, Hives-like garage-punk (All Cranked Up), instrumental surf (Cat Call), twisty new wave (Buzzkill) and even, on The Repenter, a classy songwriterly character assassination worthy of Elvis Costello or, indeed, Walbourne's sometime employer, Ray Davies. As such, *His Lordship* swerves possible White Stripes comparisons (Walbourne contributes bass parts, too). At a lean 30 minutes, it's a riot of edge-of-insanity vocals, percussive battery and ferocious guitars. More, please!

Andrew Perry

Kali Malone

★★★★

All Life Long

IDEOLOGIC ORGAN. CD/DL/LP

More adventures in eternity with Stockholm-based composer.

The artwork for *All Life Long* shows Kali Malone standing ankle-deep in snow, ruined concrete and wire around her. Composed for pipe organ, choir and brass quintet, her sixth album operates in a similarly stark, glacial space, a world that slams you against implacable forces of time and space. Choral tracks Passage Through The Spheres and All Life Long (For Voice), sung with stony precision by the Macadam Ensemble, combine with the antique pipe organs played by Malone and Sunn O)))'s Stephen O'Malley to create an ostensibly ecclesiastical mood. Yet there's an astringent, rough-spun quality to Fastened Maze or No Sun To Burn (For Brass), Malone slipping the collar of refined spirituality to carve out an unbounded meditative space. Her ability to dominate a room with minimal musical movement is astonishing; this record lowers the temperature, heightens the senses, slows down life, frame by frame.

Victoria Segal

Vera Sola

★★★★

Peacemaker

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

Second album from Danielle Aykroyd, daughter of Dan.

A PROTÉGÉ of Elvis Perkins – who guests on a couple of tracks here – Vera Sola wrote and played everything on her 2018 debut, *Shades*. Second time around, her formerly black and white world is now in blazing Technicolor. To that end, she's not only recruited Milk Carton Kid Kenneth Pattengale as co-producer and intermittent co-writer, there's a full band, a string-section, Swarmatron and brass. Reassuringly, the songs are strong enough to carry the new load. She evokes Patsy Cline on the lonesome Waiting ("Turn on the lights before you go/I want to watch you close the door"); before the last-seconds lyrical twist to the percussive, vitriolic I'm Lying, she mutters "I love you, I love you, I love you, I'm lying", while, propelled by massed strings, the magnificent standout, Desire Path, shows she can do a cutting-edge earworm too.

John Aizlewood

Vera Sola, AKA Danielle Aykroyd: now in blazing Technicolor.

Ebru Yildiz

Staying alive: Hurray For The Riff Raff's Alynda Segarra refuses to stoop before despair.

Blue planet

New Orleans rover gracefully reckons with the old times and the end days. By Victoria Segal.

Hurray For The Riff Raff

★★★★

The Past Is Still Alive

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

BACHMAN'S WARBLER; the Mariana fruit bat; the bridled white-eye, the "dear dodo": on Buffalo, a lovely country lament on Hurray For The Riff Raff's ninth album, Alynda Segarra lists just a few bright and beautiful things driven towards total extinction. It's not just glowing colours and tiny wings vanishing, though: written after Segarra's father died, *The Past Is Still Alive* is a record that also confronts the idea of human obliteration, whether as a species or as individuals. "I used to think I was born into the wrong generation," sings Segarra on Ogallala, a track that shares an apocalyptic roar with Phoebe Bridgers' I Know The End, "but now I know I made it right on time/To watch the world burn."

If *The Past Is Still Alive* is resigned, however, it's by no means supine. It's an act of fierce witness bearing, part memory box, part salute into a setting sun. The singer left their New York home aged 17, jumping freight trains, living rough, playing on street corners and in squats.

They know what it takes to push up through the concrete and wire of a hostile environment, and as with 2022 album *Life On Earth*, or 2017 song Pa'Lante, they present it with tender but unsentimental empathy.

"I see your track marks poking through your hoodie sleeve," Segarra sings on the railway sway of Alibi, a song about trying to lure an addict back to the living world, hope and experience duking it out in the gorgeously conversational vocals. New Orleans walk on the wild side Hawkmoon mentions driving through the Big Easy with "Miss Jonathan", a "dildo waving on her car antenna"; Snakeplant (The Past Is Still Alive) piles up memories of "fucking in the moonlight" on "garbage island", of shoplifting and Fentanyl: "Test your drugs/Remember Narcan." There's a joy here, but also an acute awareness of tragedy, Bruce Springsteen with a stick-and-poke tattoo and a Food Not Bombs sticker on their army surplus. "Say goodbye to America, I want to see it dissolve," Segarra sings on Colossus Of Roads, a song for those born to run right off the edges.

Heavy though it is, the songwriting remains remarkably light and agile. The band – including Meg Duffy of Hand Habits – follow Segarra as they find new melodic cut-throughs, ducking cross-country through fences and branches. Buffalo's overlapping phrasing is a whisper of consolation, while Matt Douglas's saxophone on Ogallala and Snakeplant (The Past Is Still Alive) suggests an unextinguishable spark of mischief, a refusal to stoop before despair.

For all its outsider watchfulness, though, *The Past Is Still Alive* can't quite shake an old-fashioned romanticism about the world and its beauty, a sense that it needs preserving. "You know that scene at the end of Titanic?" Segarra sings on Ogallala. "Well, I'm the one still playing on the deck." It feels lucky to have them on board.

Torres

★★★

What An Enormous Room

MERGE. CD/DL/LP

Many-chambered sixth album from Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter.

Tommy Kha

The title of this record comes from its wistful track Jerk Into Joy: "what an enormous room/Look at all the dancing I could do." There's no doubt Mackenzie Scott never stops moving here, switching between gothic sway, grungy stomp and electro-pop gyration, but it can make it hard to catch her eye in a meaningful way. The jittery fading to grey (Happy Man's Shoes) and wired St. Vincent nursery rhymes (Life As We Don't Know It) set the uneasy tone, but there are moments when there's space for connection. I Got The Fear picks up the Elliott Smith adoration where Phoebe Bridgers and Soccer Mommy left off; there's a world of pain in the way she articulates "plausible deniability" on Ugly Mystery. "Did I hit a nerve?" Scott asks on Collect's defiant grunge: not always, but when her aim is true, you sit up and take notice.

Victoria Segal

Brown Horse

★★★★

Reservoir

LOOSE. CD/DL/LP

Alt-country debut from Norwich-based sextet.

Sad and melancholic is often the default setting for Americana, and it's certainly the case for the debut by Norwich ensemble Brown Horse. Beginning life as a folk quartet before expanding both their numbers and musical palette to an Americana six-piece, all members of the band write songs collectively and individually, making the music deeply collaborative. Although short in the tooth, they are remarkably on-message with each other, whether shimmering through the dreamlike, Jayhawks-influenced Everlasting, the metaphor-rich Stealing Horses, or Paul Gilley, a tribute to the writer of I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry's lyrics. Americana's traditional elements – minor chords, fiddle, lap steel, banjo – are given a subtle twist by Nyle Holihan's guitar, which steers towards post-punk territory as often as country. And when coupled to the singular warbling vocals of Patrick Turner, layered with harmonies, Brown Horse find themselves possessing an entirely unique yet instantly recognisable sound.

Andy Fyfe

Maya Shenfeld

★★★★

Under The Sun

THRILL JOCKEY. CD/DL/LP

Synth, classical and choral music collide in an ode to a sick planet Earth.

A rich synthesis of drone, ambient, field recordings and modern classical, the music of Maya Shenfeld induces a regular flip-flopping of your emotions. At times portentous, disturbing and bleak, at others sunlit, optimistic and soothing. Whatever it is, it's deeply affecting. Earth and its deteriorating climate is the primary focus here. Recorded in Shenfeld's adopted hometown of Berlin and in the depths of a cavernous marble quarry in Portugal at the height of summer, the Jerusalem-born artist knits together analogue synths, woodwind, church organ, a choir and found sounds that pivot between Tehom's intense industrial throb to the intricate, Wendy Carlos-style electronic lament of Interstellar. For all the intense synthesised sounds and orchestral pieces, the last thing you hear on *Under The Sun* are choral voices, humming a gloriously beautiful refrain on Analemma. These voices gradually degrade in intensity, until you're left in silence. It leaves a dilemma – is this the sound of hope… or hopelessness? An elegant, thought-provoking record.

Stephen Worthy

Nouvelle Vague

★★★

Should I Stay Or Should I Go?

PIAS. CD/DL/LP

Fifth LP from Parisian covers band. This time it's the '80s.

Having spent albums turning punk, post-punk and new wave songs into dark, louche bossa novas, Nouvelle Vague have turned their film noir eye to the '80s. And so here they grapple with 13 songs unrelated by anything except time, from the poppy – Dead Or Alive's You Spin Me Round (Like A Record), the inevitable Only You – to the more intriguing (The Associates' Breakfast, Bauhaus's She's In Parties). The strength and weakness is a broadly similar approach, where songs are slowed down and assorted female singers offer breathy vocals which glide over leader Marc Collin's wry but edge-free backdrop. The more they twist the song, the better they are, so Blondie's Rapture blossoms with a newly sinister, brass-laden hue, while, impressively, Girls On Film's makeover owes much to Fun Boy Three's Tunnel Of Love. An appealing diversion.

John Aizlewood

Les Amazones D'Afrique

★★★★

Musow Danse

REAL WORLD. CD/DL/LP

Impactful seize-the-moment third album from the West African supergroup formed in 2014.

This excellent follow-up to 2020's *Amazones Power* welcomes two new members – Alvie Bitemo, the activist and actress originally from Congo-Brazzaville, and Ivorian artist Dobet Gnahoré – to the core of Mamani Keïta, Fafa Ruffino and Kandy Guira, and their voices add to the group's already abundant vocal range. Produced by Jackknife Lee, the songs – dedicated to bringing about gender equality and the eradication of ancestral violence – are delivered with boundless energy and a terrific force, as Lee aligns them to a more contemporary pop sound with hip-hop, trap and Pan-African influences coming together. There are 808s and sensory synths galore, but it's the powerful message and those voices – tough soulful leads and contrastingly sweet gospel harmonies – that hold sway here.

Lois Wilson

Aron & The Jeri Jeri Band

★★★★

Dama Bëgga Ñibi

URBAN TROUT. CD/DL/LP

Fusion collaboration's postmodern mbalax mash-ups.

Several years in the making, the idea for *Dama Bëgga Ñibi* (I Want To Go Home) was sparked in 2018 when Senegalese percussionist Bakane Seck met the New Zealand-born jazz pianist/producer Aron Ottignon in Berlin. Collaborative sessions began in Senegal and were finished during lockdown when Seck and his Jeri Jeri Band were stranded in Germany. Taking an anything-goes approach to the sound design, Ottignon has layered diverse sounds and styles above the band's rousing mbalax core, with never a dull moment: guest vocalist Baaba Maal sounds strong as ever on Teddoungal, Mama Djuma drifts between African jazz-funk, synth-pop and intergalactic space rock, and Naldore turns cold wave. Meanwhile the flute on Jeri Jeri points to Latin jazz and the steel pan on Sunugal, Kaolack and Strange People posits the music between three continents.

David Katz

Fer Franco

★★★

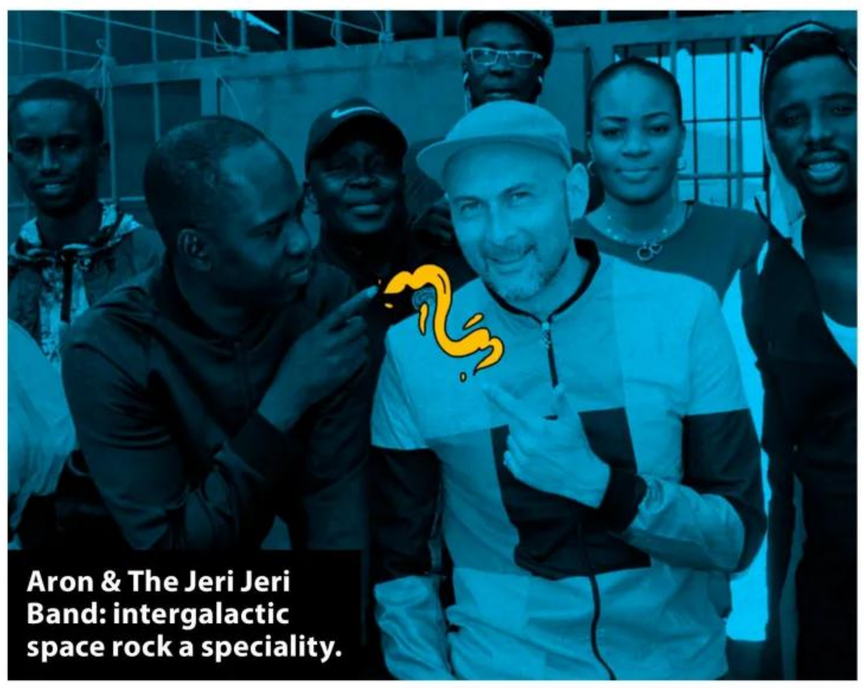
Ritos De Paso

FER FRANCO. DL/LP

Pop, prog and post-rock join hands on Guatemalan artist/producer's solo debut.

As keyboardist for out-there Guatemalan cellist Mabe Fratti and veteran of Manchester alt-rockers Cosmos Collapse, Fer Franco is used to straddling several sonic worlds. Nonetheless, *Ritos De Paso* heads further out there than many debuts, whether offsetting Gary Burton's Frippy guitars with dense thickets of reverb and synths on Ya No Vivo Aquí, or building Asumir Forma's sci-fi techno pulse into a swirling thrall of tension and release. Guests Hector Tosta and Fratti add to its air of risk. While Fratti's captivating voice is to the fore on Tu Señal, Tosta's bass bridges Eliminar Lo Innecesario's buzzing synths and cavernous soundscapes to create something both jazzy and Eno-esque. Blessed with an unusual ear for orchestration, Franco's debut seems to shift on every listen, beauty springing from unexpected sources.

Andy Cowan



Bo Huang

Aron & The Jeri Jeri Band: intergalactic space rock a speciality.

Jon Langford & The Men Of Gwent

★★★★

Lost On Land & Sea

COUNTRY MILE. CD/DL/LP

Mekons founder back on home soil; recorded mostly live in rural mid-Wales.

Like the saying goes, you can take the boy out of Wales, but even if you send him to Chicago for decades and keep him busy painting pictures and fronting no end of bands, it won't stop him coming home to make an LP with friends. This is Langford's third with The Men Of Gwent, a sextet including former members of The Darling Buds (Matt Gray), Pretty Things (Barkley McKay) and Give Me Memphis (Julian Hayman). Its 12 songs are a pretty perfect balance of pub rock, jangly punk and ballads, keyboards, mandolin and jagged guitar. They abound with local characters, real and mythical: Ruby, the woman who used to dance with the American soldiers; sad and lonesome Mrs Hammer's Dream about a woman whose infant son was found dead in the Brecon Beacons; and a highlight, Encounter With A Selkie Off Llangranog, slow and lovely with harmonies and seagulls.

Sylvie Simmons

James Elkington

★★★★

Me Neither

NO QUARTER. CD/DL/LP

At last, the guitarist's playful personality sweeps into these instrumental delights.

James Elkington was bored by himself. After releasing 2020's stately and assured *Ever-Roving Eye*, his next set of burgeoning guitar compositions made him feel as if he'd driven into a rut that led nowhere else. Fits and starts followed, as did a string of brief pieces rapidly made each morning, just for personal bemusement. The result of those experiments, *Me Neither*, is Elkington's most relaxed and disarming album ever, its 29 instrumentals arriving, delighting, and fading as quickly as whatever mood in which he happened to wake. Though he likens it to his library music, available to score the next meet-cute sensation or reflective battlefield scene, his versatility as a guitarist (and propensity for title puns) makes the entire hour enjoyable. The aqueous waltz of Tree Breather, the country frolic of Cup Cape, the graceful gaze of A Round, A Bout: this is Elkington at delicious ease, drawing you into whatever space he deems fit to shape.

Grayson Haver Currin

WORLD

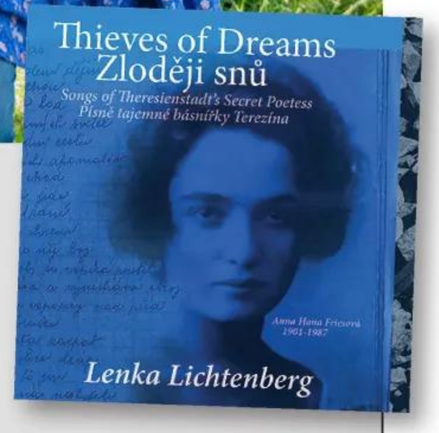
BY DAVID HUTCHEON

Lenka Lichtenberg

★★★★

Thieves Of Dreams (Zloději Snů)

SIX DEGREES. CD/DL



Gorgeous tribute to the poet (and the singer's grandmother) Anna Hana Friesová.

Between 1942 and 1945, Friesová was a prisoner in the Theresienstadt ghetto and concentration camp; there she kept two notebooks to record her experiences and thoughts on the breakdown of her marriage, romantic fantasies, betrayal. She never passed on her stories before her death in 1987, but the notebooks endured, to be discovered by the Toronto-based Lichtenberg in 2016. Despite clues in some of the titles – translated from Czech as I Wanted To Curse You, Bitter Land, or Run, Run, You Little Human – you'd never guess the background from the resulting album, however, as it is an utterly beguiling, immersive listen, with the singer clearly determined to give her granny the most beautiful memorial possible. Lichtenberg's voice is a treasure but the settings – dominated by piano and strings – and the harmonies are wonderful. A simply stunning collection, despite the provenance.

ALSO RELEASED

London Afrobeat Collective

★★★

Esengo

CANOPY. DL/LP

Fourth album from a group whose name says everything you need to know. The nonet have been adding to their repertoire, however; so while openers Topesa Esengo Na Motema and My Way are worthy of the Afrika 70, El Ritmo De Londres is a funky slice of salsa. In a genre short of female stars, vocalist Juanita Euka is a real find.

Bounaly

★★★★

Dimanche À Bamako

SAHEL SOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

Not the Amadou And Mariam album of the same name, Ali 'Bounaly' Traoré's debut was recorded at what must have been quite the wedding in the Malian capital. It features six lengthy takamba guitar workouts of the sort Niger's Mdou Moctar specialises in, though Bounaly plays his six strings with such a ferocity he frequently sounds like a Celtic piper.

Dominique Dalcan

★★★

Last Night A Woman Saved My Life

OSTINATO. CD/DL/LP

Inspired by Dalcan's 2020 exhibition of the same name, which showcased Lebanese women discussing their daily lives, these 11 songs take traditional instruments, electronic twists and female singers from across northern Africa and the Middle East. Souad Massi (Algeria), Lynn Adib (Syria) and Yara Lapidus (Lebanon) are among the great vocalists, though the Auto-Tune can distract.

YĪN YĪN

★★★

Mount Matsu

GLITTERBEAT. CD/DL/LP

The most obvious comparison is Khruangbin, but with guitar and keyboards mimicking a host of Asian instruments, the Dutch quartet's third LP proves tricky to nail. Thai surf, Japanese funk, Cambodian psychedelia and Chinese disco all come easy to them, so this sounds like the soundtrack-in-waiting to a Tarantino caper set in a Hong Kong disco in 1978. *DH*

In full gloom: Real Estate chase the light on *Daniel*.

Uptight, all right

New Jersey melancholics keep up the wistful thinking on sixth album. By Victoria Segal.

Real Estate

★★★★

Daniel

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

"HEY BUDDY, what's got into you?" asks Martin Courtney repeatedly on Somebody New, the opening track of Real Estate's new album. That's very much the question that hovers over *Daniel*, the band's follow-up to 2020's *The Main Thing*, its songs steeped in the kind of gentle beauty that tends to exacerbate nagging existential anxiety, poignantly blurring the lines between euphoria and crushing sadness.

It's not an entirely new issue for the New Jersey quintet: since their self-titled 2009 debut, Real Estate have been sensitive to the dappled flicker of nostalgia and memory, to transience and uncertainty. Green Aisles, from 2011's *Days*, captured the rush of sunbeams through leaves, even as the car heads towards a colder – and inevitably diminishing – future; Easy mentioned "floating on an inner tube in the sun", a moment that never lasts.

Daniel seems even more acutely aware of gathering gloom. Taking a statistical approach might not be in keeping with the record's fuzzy emotional data, but out of 11 songs, seven make some mention of the sun or the light. (Another one, the butter-soft R.E.M. of Say No More, does include a reference to "listening to *Harvest Moon*" – telling, given the record's preoccupation with passing time, even if it doesn't quite fit the sample.) It's a level of worry about daylight hours you would expect from pilots or photographers, not indie musicians.

As a result, *Daniel* (recorded in Nashville with Kacey Musgraves producer Daniel Tashian, although not necessarily named after him) conveys an expert melancholy, its ups always just on the brink of an elegant down. "I'm gathering material," sings Courtney on Flowers, "and holding it to the light" – the music, like the stuff of life, has a similarly iridescent thread running through it, brightened or dulled depending on how the band move. Interior – of a car? A bar? A head? – comes with a woozy Big Star hangover; Market Street ("Things don't seem right/Bathed in sunlight") is profoundly uncomfortable in its own skin, despite its Peter Buck-like fluidity; Haunted World slips between dreams and reality, Justin Schipper's flossy pedal steel further softening its edges.

Even a song called You Are Here is ambiguous, fractured by distortion and oddly baggy beats, its map held at a curious angle. "I hear a voice inside my head/Can't figure out what it's saying" runs the misty There She Goes strum of Water Underground, a song about songwriting. "There is a sound/Like a signal between stations it's hard to hear." It's not unlike the experience of listening to *Daniel*. What's got into Real Estate? It's hard to put a name to it, even if it's not unfamiliar. If these songs are the pretty, complicated consequences, though, then let's hope they remain in half-light.

Office Dog

★★★★

Spiel

FLYING NUN. CD/DL/LP

Dunedin trio hark back to NZ indie's 'golden age'.

If you knew nothing about Office Dog, their dark indie noise would still likely point you immediately towards fabled New Zealand label Flying Nun and some of their less forgiving '80s acts such as Children's Hour and The Skeptics. Led by Dunedin songwriter and guitarist Kane Strang, who has released solo LPs on Dead Oceans and Ba Da Bing!, the trio bludgeon their way through their debut LP, from the rippling black pool of opening track Shade to single Big Air, which extracts every ounce of pop from its grungy post-punk bounce, not unlike a Kiwi Fontaines D.C. Mostly, however, *Spiel*'s jagged and often surprising changes of direction keeps the listener firmly on the back foot, so disregarding of convention it's impossible to second guess where a song might go next. It may make for a rollercoaster musical ride, but it's utterly thrilling.

Andy Fyfe

Lime Garden

★★★★

Lime Garden

SO YOUNG. CD/DL/LP

Brighton indie-rockers are gloriously tuneful, but listen closely to the words too.

Lime Garden's melodically compelling and rhythmically complex indie rock is so expertly crafted it almost doesn't bear discussion. Let's focus instead on singer Chloe Howard's lyrics, which invest the group's effervescent, corrosive tunefulness with an equally expert balance of anxiety and insight, her words a tool sharp enough to pick apart the welter of parasocial phantoms that is Millennial life in the 21st century. Howard composes portraits in acid wit with clear purpose: Nepotism (baby), an amusing little story that also spells out something rather chilling about power imbalances along the way. And when she cloaks herself in irony, she's often at her most vulnerable, as on Fear's ambivalent couplet, "I fear the feeling of failure/I fear the thought of some success". Allied to keening, reedy vocals and sophisticated hooks, these songs deliver a truly impressive debut.

Stevie Chick

Omni

★★★★

Souvenir

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP

Atlanta, Georgia post-punks bring more perfectly-formed curios.

"The Sphinx, The Nile… I ordered it all", drawls Omni's singer/bassist Philip Frobos on Plastic Pyramid, an arch, emotionally unreadable duet with Automatic's Izzy Glaudini. Omni's universe comprises other wonders: absurdist poetry, angular, Wire-meets-Talking Heads guitars, and an exacting flair for the tricky subdivisions of maths-rock precision. In succinct, ideas-crammed winners such as Exacto and INTL Waters, Frankie Broyles' screwy guitars and Frobos's motor-mouth parade of imagery and non-sequitur invigorate. Plus we get Easter eggs; stylistic lane-switches such as that which sees Compliment invoke Big Star for a few seconds, and Plastic Pyramid briefly feints at T.Rex's Hot Love. *Souvenir* is Omni's first LP in five years; their first with Chris Yonker as their full-time drummer. It's over in a flash, an exhilarating fairground ride you won't want to disembark.

James McNair

Dylan John Thomas

★★★★

Dylan John Thomas

IGNITION. CD/DL/LP

Fast-rising troubadour's feisty but expansive debut.

Growing up in the Glasgow care system and diagnosed with ADHD, Dylan John Thomas hasn't had things easy. But having honed his craft busking his city's streets before attracting the attention of Gerry Cinnamon, he's built a fervent cult following. On the evidence of an earworm-heavy debut which both sparkles with optimism (there's actual jaunty whistling on Melancholy's Cure) and sinks with despair, he's built to last. Thomas may have the most Caledonian vocals since The Proclaimers and his most obvious forebears, The View, but he's much more than an ordinary Joe Strummer. The twinkling Now And Then merges impossible catchiness with bleak lyrics (a calling card it transpires); Champs-Élysées shows he can spin a yarn and the raw emotion of the harrowing live coda, Wake Up Ma, will tingle the most resistant of spines.

John Aizlewood

Sinna Nasseri

C Diab

★★★★

Imerro

TONAL UNION. LP

Canadian multi-instrumentalist's fifth suite of immersive 'post-classical grunge'.

Titled after an archaic word for desire, Caton Diab's latest attempt at capturing the wilderness of his Vancouver Island home finds him widening his palette. Best known for his bowed guitar figures, on *Imerro* he experiments with other instruments "to see if they had anything to say". Quite a lot, as it turns out: a lonesome trumpet setting the celestial direction of Lunar Barge, hoopoe bird calls intersecting Quatsino Sound's long, bowed flourishes, screaming saxophones layering Erratum's fanfare from the edge, bagpipe-like horns dominating Surge Savard, an insistent three-note figure and crunchy, broken-ice percussion microtonally infusing The Excuse Of Fiction. Diab isn't short on feeling, either, his impactful minimalism drawing parallels with Colin Stetson, Arthur Russell and Tim Hecker on songs evoking the sun and shade passing over his mountainous location.

Andy Cowan

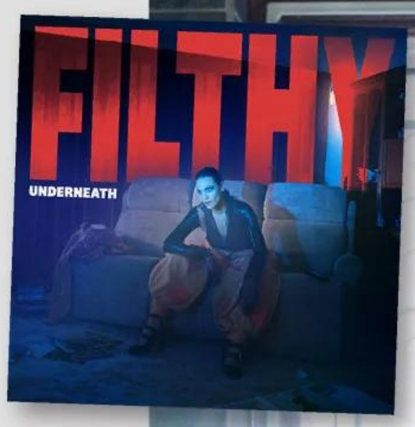
Nadine Shah

★★★★

Filthy Underneath

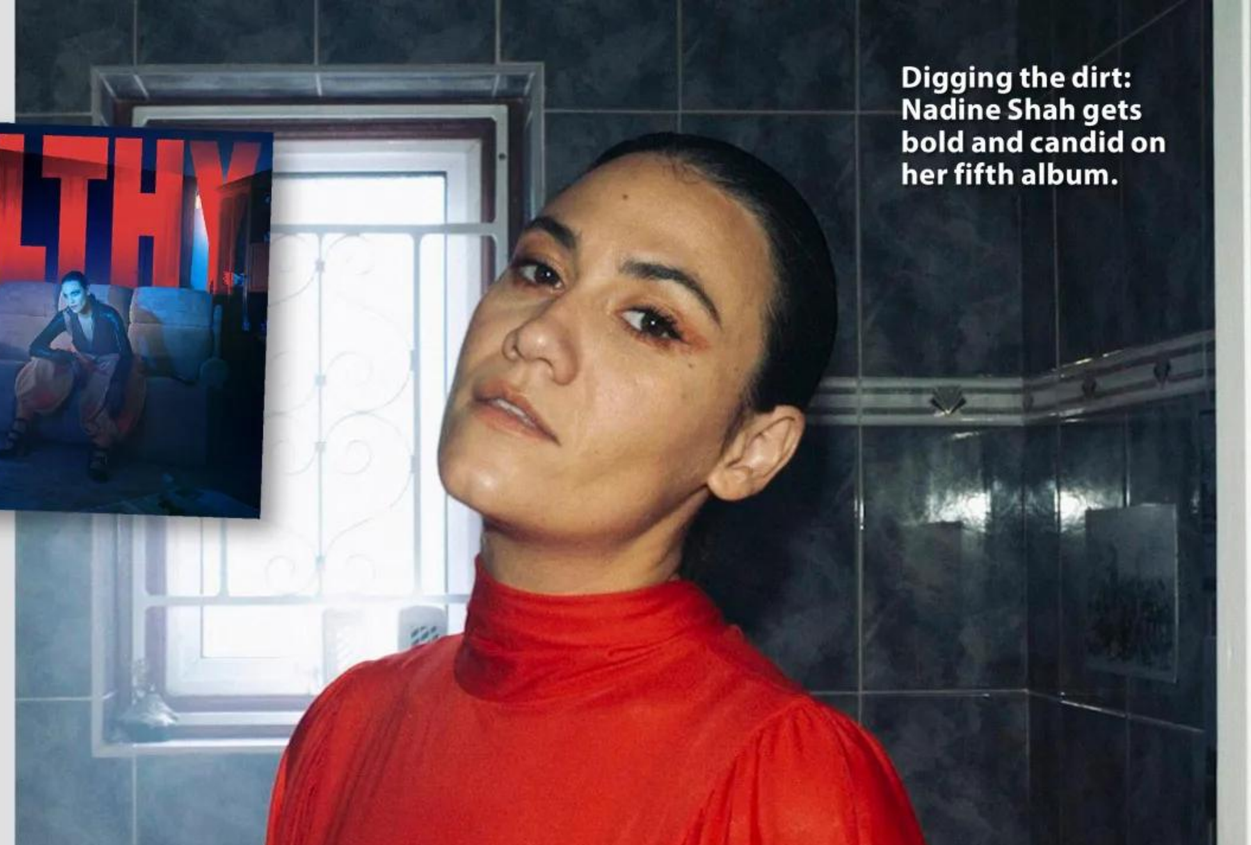
EMI NORTH. CD/DL/LP

A brave catharsis – and the inaugural release of new imprint EMI North.



BRILLIANTLY-EXECUTED with Shirley Bassey-like surety in an arresting, always distinctive, lyrical voice, *Filthy Underneath* is defined by the "unprecedented turbulence" visited upon Nadine Shah since 2020's *Kitchen Sink*. Having returned to Whitburn, South Tyneside to nurse her terminally ill mother, Shah grieves for Heather in beatbox gothic remembrance See My Girl, and recalls her own marriage-ending suicide attempt amid the stark, pulsing bells of French Exit. These bold and candid diary entries are set to percussive tribal grooves, or splashy, jazzy ones with exotic clangs of zither, fat synth and spectral vocal harmonies. Amid it all, Shah fashions fine, free-associative hooks gleaned from counselling sessions ("Sinatra, Viagra, Iguana"), and even nails the *Zeitgeist*: "I roam around on a chequered board of vape shops and nail bars", runs part of the desolate Sad Lads Anonymous.

James McNair



Digging the dirt: Nadine Shah gets bold and candid on her fifth album.

Shed Seven

★★★★

A Matter Of Time

COOKING VINYL. CD/DL/LP/MC

The Britpop comeback kings come back again, with first album in seven years.

Wrongly – if widely – regarded as the runts of the Britpop litter, Shed Seven's reunion and subsequent album *Instant Pleasures* were remarkably and surprisingly successful. They're playing their biggest ever shows and *A Matter Of Time* is the sound of a band for whom the lights are turning green. Like its predecessor, it was recorded at Youth's studio in Spain (one of his dogs, Mr Scruff, graces the sleeve) and the tone is more euphoric still. Rowetta (Happy Mondays) does a tub-thumping vocal turn on In Ecstasy, while Pete Doherty duets with Rick Witter on the galleon-paced closer Throwaways. With its November Rain-style guitar solo, Throwaways is their biggest song since Chasing Rainbows, but these heady anthems – all bursting to be played live, all with choruses to spare, many with narcotic references – are a rare reminder that some bands are better second time around.

John Aizlewood

Cabane

★★★

Brulée

CABANE. CD/DL/LP

Belgian Thomas Jean Henri's second batch of lovelorn ballads, with special guests.

Thomas Jean Henri has mastered the art of wistful ballads in a classic Gallic style, though he clearly doesn't rate himself as a singer. The debut Cabane LP *Grande Est La Maison* was fronted by This Is The Kit's Kate Stables (channelling Françoise Hardy) and Will Oldham (channelling Will Oldham), plus Sean O'Hagan's *Melody Nelson*-evoking string arrangements. Stables and O'Hagan return for *Brulée* alongside Tunng frontman Sam Genders (channelling some of Robert Wyatt's fragile heartache) as Henri fuses folktronica to Michel Legrand's soundtrack to *Les Parapluies De Cherbourg*. The song titles (Melodies Of Love; The Italian Mysteries; Amour(s)) underline Henri's love for love (the word is sung over 30 times) and paint a backdrop of Europe's most legendary passion pits. With Stables and Genders in the role of the doomed lovers, in the words of All We Could Do, "forever blue".

Martin Aston

Katy Kirby

★★★★

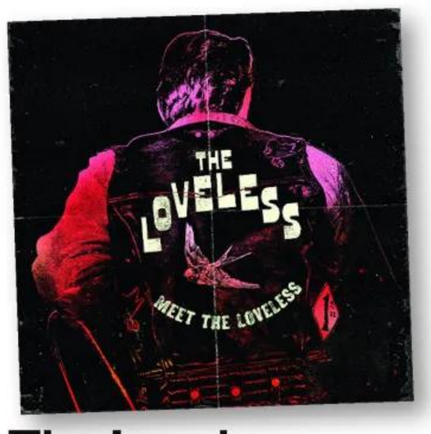
Blue Raspberry

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

Cryptic love songs and rapturous melodies from Texan-born singer/songwriter.

The follow-up to Kirby's acclaimed 2021 debut *Cool Dry Place*, this album has a more emphatic, ambitious sound. Recorded in Nashville and her new home in Brooklyn with co-collaborators Logan Chung and Alberto Sewald, Kirby's rich arrangements add pop-soul drama to songs about mind games of love and friendship. Lurching guitar, chiming piano and stabs of overdubbed choral harmony are combined with vocals that swing from sweetly intimate to dry and flippant. Kirby has a way with effortless melody, particularly on Cubic Zirconia, a song about falling in love with a woman which, given her evangelical upbringing, conveys a moment of sensual release. Other tracks like Salt Crystal and Wait Listen peek into an interior world of delicious emotional chaos. "I am under her heel/Like rock candy," sings Kirby, with quiet glee.

Lucy O'Brien



The Loveless

★★★★

Meet The Loveless

CADIZ. CD/DL/LP

Marc Almond's underdog glam-garage combo.

Initially convened in the late 2010s by Almond as a club-level party band where he could wrap his quavering tonsils around some choice rock tunes, The Loveless are powerfully staffed by Sigue Sigue Sputnik guitarist Neal X and Iggy Pop's touring rhythm section. While early shows saw them covering glam big-hitters by Bowie and The Sweet, this debut takes a more recherché deep-dive into mid-'60s garage and '70s hard rock, where The Kinks' I'm Not Like Everybody Else can comfortably co-exist alongside a full-raunch Under My Wheels by Alice Cooper. Neither Wild In The Streets (one of two in-house compositions, which opens like AC/DC's Let There Be Rock), nor Hot Hard And Heavy, a Montrose-esque hog anthem by LA proto-metal band Smokey, are exactly what one might've foreseen Soft Cell's 1981 synth-pop king belting out in later life. Against the odds, however, *Meet The Loveless* proves an enjoyable encounter, full of misfit attitude and nocturnal edge.

Andrew Perry

Lizzie No

★★★★

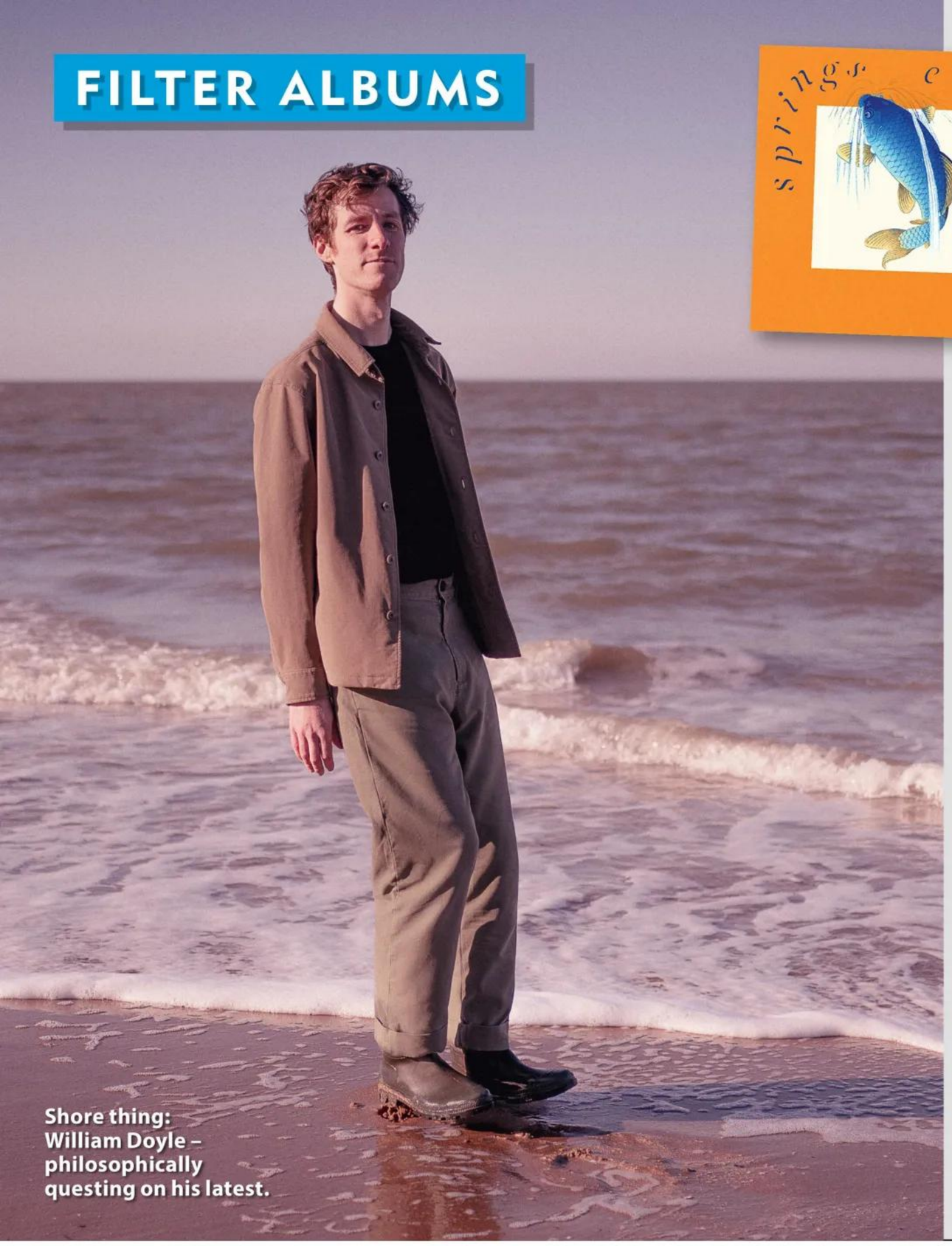
Halfsies

THIRTY TIGERS. CD/DL/LP

Shimmering third album from Brooklyn-based songwriter, harpist and activist.

Lizzie No uses bittersweet Americana that leans heavily towards country – hardly a genre known for its embrace of black artists – to tell her story: that of a queer black woman. In its melody and tone, her new album sounds like an intriguing lost gem from Joni Mitchell or Suzanne Vega. On the title track, picked guitar and whip-cracking drums herald her laconic vocal, and it's beguiling stuff: "I keep mourning friends I never had." Sleeping In The Next Room, with its Appalachian harmonies, has the crystalline intensity of Nanci Griffith's From A Distance. There are alt-rock stormers like Lagunita (Dandy Warhols crossed with a young Roseanne Cash); there's resilience in gently strummed The Heartbreak Store ("I came to sell all the hurt I couldn't keep") and there's gruff self-denigration in Deadbeat ("I'm a wrong turn… You're a damned fool"). Intimate, complex, hypnotic. No half measures here.

Glyn Brown



Shore thing: William Doyle – philosophically questing on his latest.

William Doyle

★★★★

Springs Eternal

TOUGH LOVE. CD/DL/LP

Abandon hope: former East India Youth jumps into the life/death battle.

THERE CAN be few times in history that the words "a strangely death-like grip" have been uttered with such jauntiness as they are on *Springs Eternal*, William Doyle's third album under his own name. The singer-songwriter's brain-in-a-jar art-pop seems tightly controlled, but Doyle can't stop fear of extinction events – global and local – seeping into his beautifully arranged music. There's a twitchiness that honours a line of uptight pop thinkers – XTC, Robyn Hitchcock, Brian Eno (who contributes electronics on Relentless Melt and Surrender Yourself) – but oblivion lurks round every corner, in a bank loan's terms and conditions, an imagined obituary, a recurring dream. The bleak ticking of time is audible under Cannot Unsee (an echo of Happy Together, ironically), or in Castawayed's clever techno-horror. For all its filigree detail, *Springs Eternal* is a big, philosophically questing record, a velvet glove hiding a death-like grip.

Victoria Segal

MGMT

★★★★

Loss Of Life

MOM+POP MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Andrew VanWyngarden and Ben Goldwasser's latest opaque fix; their first for six years.

Still exponents of the less-info-equals-more-mystique approach, MGMT 'announced' *Loss Of Life* via a pic of a test-pressing and the anagrammatic caption "elf of soils". Cryptic lyrics mentioning "the pain of the bubblegum dog" don't exactly clear the mists, but their fifth LP's spectacular, oracular pop-psych is reward/information enough. Like fellow kosmiche-nauts Flaming Lips with Miley Cyrus, MGMT open the door to 'proper' pop here, hence Christine And The Queens' excellent duet on Dancing In Babylon, which is as perfectly '80s as Cyndi Lauper. Elsewhere, their ongoing penchant for the coolest, most fatigued-sounding synths informs Loss Of Life (Part 2), People In The Streets is the prophetic-sounding stand-out, and the deft sound-sculpture of Nothing To Declare shares DNA with John Lennon's Julia and Simon & Garfunkel's The Boxer. A mesmerising return.

James McNair

El Perro Del Mar

★★★★

Big Anonymous

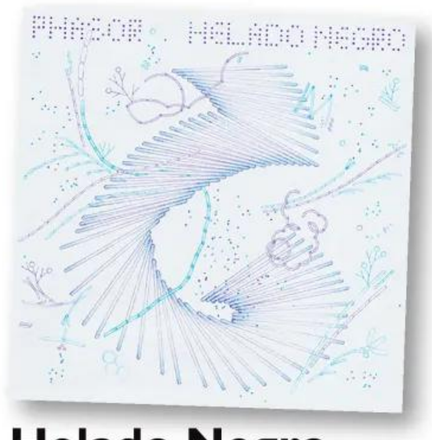
CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

Swedish sonic adventurer wrestles with the impact of loss.

In autumn 2019, Sweden's Sarah Assbring – who records as El Perro Del Mar – issued a version of Please Stay as a single. In early 1966, Liverpool beat group The Cryin' Shames' ghostly rendition of this Burt Bacharach song became the last hit produced by Joe Meek – in chart terms, his memorial. Evidently fascinated with Please Stay, the glass-voiced Assbring has re-recorded it in suitably wraithlike fashion for her eighth album, *Big Anonymous*. Its themes are grief, survival guilt and a concomitant sense of mortality. On the final track, she sings, "I'm living with the kiss of death." Musically, the spectral sound lies between Fever Ray at their least forbidding and the shadows cast by David Lynch soundtracks. The brooding album's genesis was a 2019 commission from Stockholm's Royal Dramatic Theatre. In this context, Assbring's Please Stay makes perfect sense.

Kieron Tyler

Parri Thomas



Helado Negro

★★★★

Phasor

4AD. CD/DL/LP

Florida songwriter's blend of alt-pop and folktronica peaks on eighth LP.

This spiritual successor to 2019's breezy *This Is How You Smile* finds Ecuadorian-American Roberto Carlos Lange pressing reset after a restorative move from New York to North Carolina. Homespun, carefree songs such as I Just Want To Wake Up With You and Best For You And Me are warm, hopeful chugs that fuse electronica, folk and chamber pop to harness his light, intoxicating vocals. Lange excels when pushing the boat farther out, whether singing offbeat on Echo Tricks Me, negotiating the fractured horns and jumping grooves of Out There or sonorously offsetting the skittering electronica of Wish You Could Be Here, a seeming collision with a cache of old rave demos. Rendered with a delicate, impressionistic touch, *Phasor*'s dreamlike entreaties cut far deeper than predecessor *Far In*'s lockdown ruminations.

Andy Cowan

Kula Shaker

★★★

Natural Magick

STRANGE FOLK. CD/DL/LP/MC

Their seventh album, but the first this century with the original line-up.

Having not only re-recruited original keyboardist Jay Darlington, but the management team from their golden years, Kula Shaker are reclaiming some of the ground which was lost so long ago. Crispian Mills remains the master of a heroically daft lyric ("It was Mahatma Gandhi, or it might have been Groucho Marx, who said in one of their more lucid moments, 'fuck war'"); and his oft-ridiculed fondness for Eastern culture continues, most successfully on the catchy Indian Record Player, while the rip-roaring title track shows they can still kick up a storm. If Idon'twannapaymytaxes (sic) is as childish as its title suggests (presumably its protagonist doesn't 'wanna' use the NHS or drive on roads either), the closing scarf-waver, Give Me Tomorrow, is genuinely moving. *Natural Magick* is no radical step forwards, but it is an exuberant retrenchment of why Kula Shaker almost made it big.

John Aizlewood

Junodream

★★★★

Pools Of Colour

AWAL. CD/DL/LP

British quartet's debut: dazzling pop meets existential dread.

In the sleevenotes, Junodream claim *Pools Of Colour* tackles, "the insignificance of the human experience through four prisms: emotional, social, spatial and dreams." You might expect an equally portentous soundtrack, but instead we get lush, elevated pop-rock landing between Radiohead (the missing link between *Pablo Honey* and *The Bends*?), Coldplay and The 1975. Each song purportedly addresses one facet of pain, from confusion (Kitchen Sink Drama) to depression (The Beach, with ironically the LP's most euphoric chorus), alienation (Close Encounters, channelling Radiohead) to tech billionaires (the title track laments the lab monkey fatally implanted with Elon Musk's Neuralink 'brain chip'). The weight of angst in Ed Vyvyan's lyrics is born lightly in his honeyed voice and a fusillade of hooks, like a brilliantly devised Trojan horse.

Martin Aston

Tony Christie

★★★

We Still Shine

UMR. CD/DL/LP

Sentimentality well-earned as a life in song fades away – his first album in 12 years.

When middle-of-the-road belter Anthony Fitzgerald renamed himself after the Darling star Julie Christie, he paid lip service to the Swinging Sixties while bringing Vegas-style razzmatazz to the Northern pub and club circuit. His catchy 1971 chart breakthrough (Is This The Way To) Amarillo hit even bigger when revived in 2005, with fellow Yorkshiremen Jarvis Cocker and Richard Hawley championing him to a retro-hungry younger crowd; strong and confident LPs in the lounge, Northern soul and Irish folk styles would follow. As ever bringing the sound of the Big Country to Blighty, Christie has, at the age of 80, cut a countrified album in Nashville. Despite a recent dementia diagnosis, Christie remains in sincere, engaged voice, and the band cooks nicely on 11 well-crafted and heartfelt songs, Home Home Home and Early Morning Memphis being standouts.

Mat Snow

JAZZ

BY ANDY COWAN

The Pineapple Thief

★★★

It Leads To This

KSCOPE. BR/CD/DL/LP

Bruce Soord's dreamy Somerset progressives return.

Along with Big Big Train and Porcupine Tree, The Pineapple Thief are the vanguard of a mini but very 21st century prog-rock revival. With European cultdom long-assured, leader Bruce Soord is in thrall to *Up*-era Peter Gabriel and, especially, Elbow, while, perhaps uniquely in pop music, Rubicon muses upon how Julius Caesar was tempted into tyranny. At their lavishly textured best, on the stately Put It Right and the harrowing To Forget, there's warmth and vulnerability against a backdrop of warped guitars and quietly clattering beats from one-time Porcupine Tree and King Crimson drummer Gavin Harrison. Everything comes together on the title track, where an almost funky guitar twang expands into a dense, intense wall of sound infused with spartan hush and Soord's yearning vocals. It really shouldn't work, but like much of *It Leads To This*, it does.

John Aizlewood

Orgōne

★★★★

Chimera

3 PALM. CD/DL/LP

Irresistible grooves for parties, orgies and cultural studies.

The band backing Say She She on their instant-classic second album *Silver* and current world tour, guitarist Sergio Rios (who also produced *Silver*) and keyboardist Dan Hastie have their fingers in other pies, including the LA jam band Orgōne. Their run of records since 2001 combines instrumentals with numbers sung by, among others, Adryon de León, Kelly Finnigan and, on this thirteenth studio album, Terin Ector, Jamie Allensworth and the Congolese Mermans Mosengo. Audibly in thrall to Isaac Hayes' blaxploitation soundtracks, Funkadelic, Curtis Mayfield, The Meters, The JB's and the Afrobeat artists building on those foundations, Orgōne range from hip-shake to stoned sway, their punchy, sensual grooves relying on strong arrangements, chops and rehearsal rather than lavish studio fairydust. Sung by Mosengo in his native Lingala, the track Tula Muisi rousingly exemplifies the back-and-forth between Africa and the USA, a serious core to Orgōne's retro-grooviness.

Mat Snow

Laura Cannell

★★★★

Midwinter Processionals

BRAWL RECORDS. CD/DL

Eighth solo album from the UK composer, improviser and multi-instrumentalist.

When first reviewing the music of Laura Cannell back in 2015, I wondered whether she might be a magician, so well was she able to reanimate ancient medieval musics and invest them with uncanny power. Of course, part of Cannell's skill lies in her intelligent musicianship, her ability to blend the experimental with the composed and the improvisatory in a manner that feels simultaneously earthly and unworldly, but it's also there in her virtuosic choice of place. Improvised on violin and recorder in the high resonant space of Norwich Cathedral nave, and then later blended with epic synth drones, these seven, imagined, secular recitals buzz, drone, scrape, chatter and pulse with an ageless, eternal light, drawing on the sounds of the dark and recent past as a means to find paths forward into the future. Winters are cold and tough, just the worst time of the year. Here is the fuel to keep you moving forward.

Andrew Male

Serious groovers: Orgōne draw on their accumulated wisdom.

Anna Webber,

Robby Krieger & The Soul Savages

★★★

Robby Krieger & The Soul Savages

PLAYERS CLUB. CD/DL/LP

Laid-back, funkified instrumentals from erstwhile Door.

Since his previous band closed – beyond the occasional part-reunion – Robby Krieger has busied himself with a mostly instrumental solo career which has avoided The Doors, the mainstream and the cutting edge. He's dipped into jazz, jazz-funk, muzak and a cover of the Pretenders' Tattooed Love Boys, but it's always been a stroll rather than a sprint. His latest backers, The Soul Savages, are tasteful rather than tastemakers and across these 10 new instrumentals there isn't a note out of place, as the ensemble glides over Ricochet Rabbit with its gambolling Chick Corea-style keyboards, or gives a sitar twist to Kingfishers & Samosas. They up the funk count on A Day In LA and juggle time signatures on the appositely titled Math Problem, but, for all the technical proficiency, there's a sense of nobody pushing themselves too hard.

John Aizlewood

David Jackson & René Van Commenée

★★★★

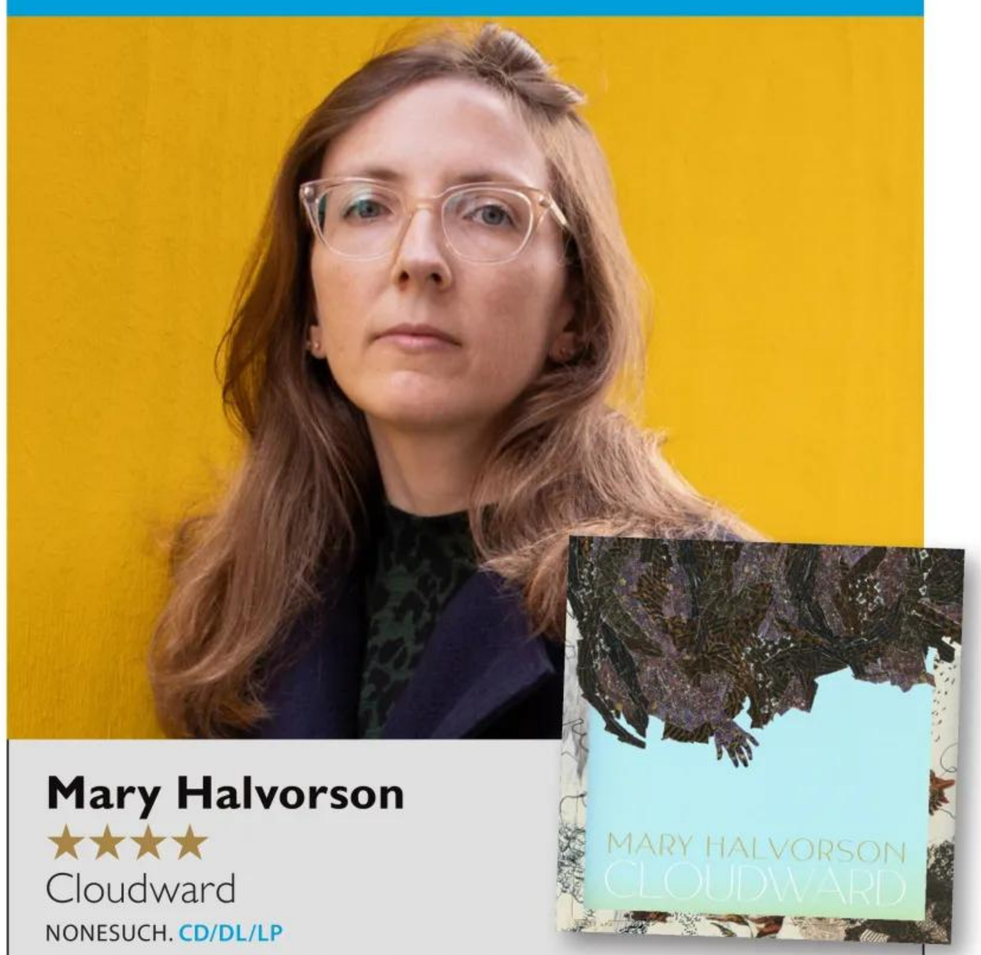
Keep Your Lane

TALKING ELEPHANT. CD/DL

VdGG saxophonist's third collaboration with Dutch artist and percussionist.

Saxophonist David Jackson always seemed to be the freest spirit with Van der Graaf Generator, a group not readily known for their parameters. *Keep Your Lane* is akin to stepping into Jackson's man cave, crammed with invention and outlandish musical toys. Working with Dutch visual artist René Van Commenée, Jackson has gathered (with Van Commenée's encouragement) a raft of unfinished ideas, and together they have created a beguiling, disquieting world. With occasional help from Colin Edwin on bass, the duo take on Moondog (Bird's Lament) and VdGG themselves (Jackson's signature Pioneers Over C). Among their originals, Pinball Potter leaps out: why have one idea when you can have many? This writer couldn't get the mechanical band the Clockwork Wizards from 1971's The Abominable Dr Phibes out of his mind while listening to *Keep Your Lane*. That is praise indeed.

Daryl Easlea



Mary Halvorson

★★★★

Cloudward

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

Optimism streaks through Brooklyn guitarist's third LP with improvisatory sextet Amaryllis.

The singular voice Mary Halvorson developed with early mentors Anthony Braxton and Joe Morris has spilled into her unpredictable compositions for Amaryllis. While Halvorson's instantly identifiable tone, carefully amped so it sounds both slithery and naturalistic, drives the creeping figures of The Tower and affectless two-note motif of Desiderata, most of *Cloudward* cedes space for the eloquent improvising of her sextet. The dovetailing interplay of trombonist Jacob Garchik and trumpeter Adam O'Farrill excels on Tailhead and Ultramarine, anchored by Tomas Fujiwara's drums and Nick Dunston's bass as Patricia Brennan's vibes dance around them. The resulting sound is high-contrast, with graceful melodic resolutions, slippery pitch-bends and experiments with form. Curios that hit at once, but can also withstand lengthy unravelling.

ALSO RELEASED

Adam Bałdych & Leszek Możdżer

★★★★

Passacaglia

ACT. CD/DL/LP

These two Polish jazz titans jammed for hours before constructing *Passacaglia* from its individual motifs. You can feel the frost on the windows on December, ornately decorated with Bałdych's pizzicato, while swarms of bright semitones course through Le Pearl, played on two grand pianos. Możdżer excels at superficially calm, glacial soundbeds for Bałdych's brooding violin textures, typified by an intimate cover of Satie's Gymnopédie.

The Sorcerers

★★★★

I Too Am A Stranger

ATA. DL/LP

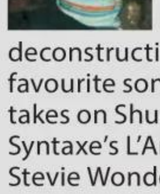
The Leeds trio of Joost Hendrickx, Neil Innes and Richard Ormrod have forged their own path at the intersection of Ethiopian jazz and '70s library music. Third album highlights Moth and Bebaynetu build tension like a lost blaxploitation soundtrack, leading listeners down rhythmic paths bejewelled with wah wah funk, rolling saxes, flying flutes and vibraphone fills. With heavy nods to Fumio Hayasaka and Mulatu Astatke.

Ches Smith

★★★★

Laugh Ash

PYROCLASTIC. CD/DL



A singular drummer whose striking originals like the writhing Minimalism and disorienting The Most Fucked traverse ever more oblique routes above Smith's wilful groove adventurism. Add in Shara Lunon's spoken-word poetics and some wall-shaking sax from James Brandon Lewis, and *Laugh Ash* is an experimental, ultimately exhilarating listen, where jazz collides head-on with post-rock, hard funk and the classical avant-garde.

DJ Harrison

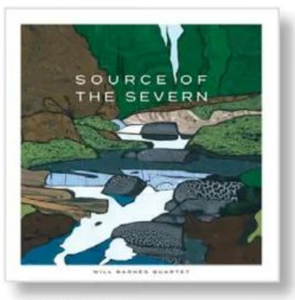
★★★★

Shades Of Yesterday

STONES THROW. CD/DL/LP

On his third solo outing, Butcher Brown drummer Harrison serves up minimalist kickback deconstructions of some favourite songs. Free-associating takes on Shuggie Otis's Pling!, Syntaxe's L'Anthropofemme and Stevie Wonder's Contusion are crammed with fresh ideas and wrong-footing grooves, in a jazz-funk pile-up. Densely packed with rubbery bass lines and a breezy sense of soul, *Shades…* arrives devilled with rhythmic detail. *AC*

FILTER ALBUMS EXTRA



Will Barnes Quartet

★★★★

Source Of The Severn

AAB. DL/LP

A homage to the Welsh landscape via throwback, Wes Montgomery-styled bebop. Guitarist Barnes brings springy deftness to The Mad March Hare and cool precision to An Echo Of Spring, showing serious acoustic chops on the Metheny-esque title track. *AC*

Imperial Wax

★★★★

Tranquiliser

GUESSWORK. CD/DL/LP

Members of The Fall's last line-up forge on with garage intentions and post-punk backbone on album number two: when it gels, as on the breakneck Post Lobotomy and Midas Touch, the *sturm und drang* is real. And get well soon Covid-struck guitarist Pete Greenway! *IH*

Kid Acne

★★★★

Hauntology Codes

LEX. DL/LP/MC

"I wrote these raps from a pebble-dash cul-de-sac," brags South Yorkshire's self-styled 'rhyme Dionysus' on his sixth solo LP. Whether namechecking Pat Benatar and Aldous Huxley or duelling with Sonnyjim and King Kashmere, every rhyme is matched by producer Spectacular Diagnostics' loping beats. *AC*

The Matinee

★★★

Change Of Scene

BANDCAMP. DL/LP

Vancouver country rock six-piece took a Pacific Northwest road trip, scribbling melodies for their fourth album in a communal notebook. Laid-back insights gleaned are evident on the easy Southern soul of Bad Addiction or The Road To Hell's Tom Petty-like top-down Americana. *GB*

Fabiano Do Nascimento & Sam Gendel

★★★★

The Room

REAL WORLD. CD/DL

Brazilian guitarist and American saxophonist's collaborative nod to Getz/Gilberto's bossa nova hook-up. All instrumentals, there's gentle beauty in its understated rhythms and air of bittersweet longing. *JB*

Noonday Underground

★★★★

Sing It From The Mountain

HANDS FULL. CD/DL

Producer Simon Dine corrals Iraina Mancini, The Zutons' Abi Harding and Trashcan Sinatras' Francis Reader to add vocals to his groovy, '60s-scented macerations of electronica, go-go guitars and liquid Disney strings. *PG*

Ohlmeier/ Fischerlehner/ Khroustaliov

★★★

In The Gloaming

NOT APPLICABLE. CD/DL

Recorded in a day to capture the twilight mood, Fischerlehner's freely improvised percussive figures and Khroustaliov's disquieting electronics supply a sonic frostiness for Ohlmeier's ever-changing bass clarinet. *AC*

Petrolz

★★★

Ranhansha

TOKA. DL/LP

Cult Tokyo indie trio's first release outside of Japan. Their 'Post City Pop' scans as indie soul-funk guitar with a harmonious core of smooth vocals and euphoric melodies. Stand-out Intruder squares the circle between Nile Rodgers-era Duran Duran and The 5th Dimension. *JB*

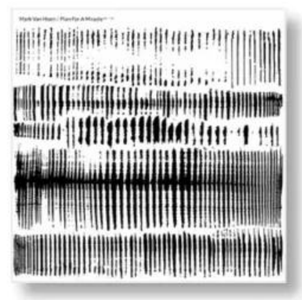
Re:EAP

★★★★

Zoo For Barbers

LEWIS RECORDINGS. CD/DL

A galaxy of home-made instruments and Miryam Solomon's cryptic vocalese drive Kevin Le Gendre's deeply immersive celebration of Edgar Allan Poe, a double CD spanning African highlife, fractured blues, spiritual jazz and Captain Beefheart. Listen in the dark, if you dare. *AC*



Mark Van Hoen

★★★★

Plan For A Miracle

DELL'ORSO. DL/LP

Electronic pioneer Mark Van Hoen's latest album finds him coming to terms with his wife's death. Whether channelling mid-'70s Eno (I Won't Give Up), early Aphex Twin (This Is For Them) or Neu! (The Underpass), his vivid sounds shimmer with emotional weight. *AC*

EXTENDED PLAY

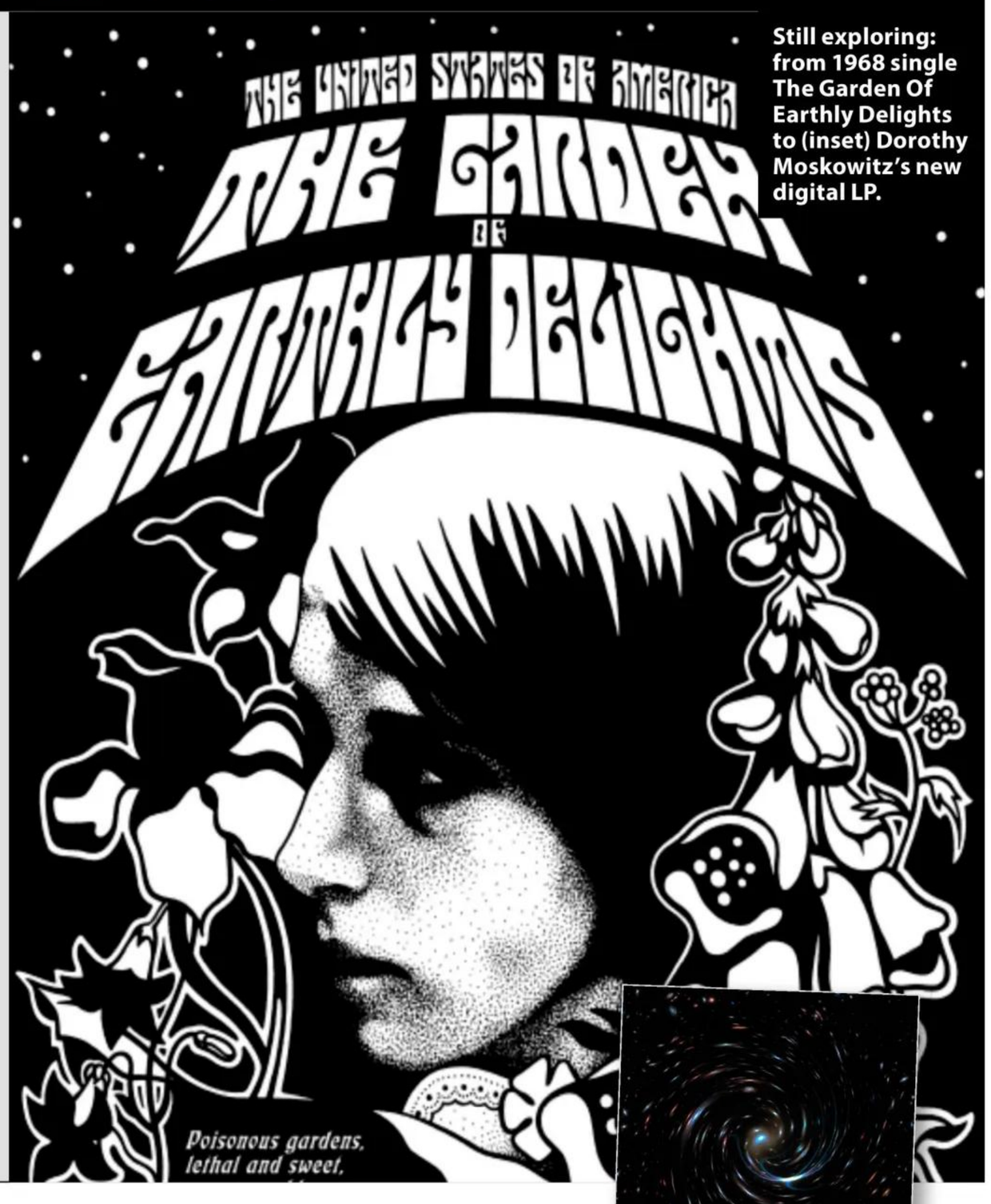
In search of space

Dorothy Moskowitz: Rising To Eternity

TOMPKINS SQUARE. DL

The former singer with The United States Of America had a remarkable 2023, releasing the acclaimed *Under An Endless Sky* with The United States Of Alchemy, and this digital-only album, celebrating the second anniversary of the launch of the Webb Space Telescope. Fifty-six years after the self-titled album by the pioneering psychedelic electronic group The United States Of America, she's still out there exploring. Initially, Moskowitz wanted to record an instrumental album of electronics and her own viola and piano, but on each track her voice, sometimes overlapping with her vocalist daughter, Melissa Falarski, hangs over shifting abstract soundscapes that include sequencers and NASA recordings. "What seemed so alien before is so close", she intones on Spectra, and on First Deep Field she notes that we can now see "the dust of all that's lived and died", in an eerie musing upon existence and the vastness of the universe, no less.

Mike Barnes



Still exploring: from 1968 single The Garden Of Earthly Delights to (inset) Dorothy Moskowitz's new digital LP.

Katie Von Schleicher

★★★★

A Little Touch Of Schleicher In The Night

SIPSMAN. CD/DL/LP

In the vein of Faye Webster for its exquisite syntax and precision melodies, this lovely LP is full of self-depreciating wit worthy of that Nilsson reference. As she sings on Elixir, "I've done with oversharing/Now I'm cool". *JB*

Dean Wareham

★★★★

Live At St Pancras Old Church, 2013

SONIC CATHEDRAL. DL/LP

Hear the breath condense on Galaxie 500/Luna man's chilly falsetto on When Will You Come Home. A Galaxie-heavy set, plus half of that year's solo *Emancipated Hearts*, with a glowing cover of New Order's Ceremony as concluding rite. *JB*

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A bigger splash

Mike Scott re-navigates the year of *This Is The Sea* across 95 tracks, 64 previously unreleased. Deep, very deep, says **John Mulvey**.

The Waterboys

★★★★

1985

CHRYSALIS. CD/DL

A SEARCH FOR information about an old New York shop called Magickal Childe, closed since 1999, can take you to some interesting places on the internet. One site suggests John Lennon was a regular visitor to the occult and esoteric store on West 19th Street, though whether he participated in the "over-the-top rituals in the back", or was scolded by the intemperate co-owner, Horrible Herman, remains unknown.

Mike Scott, questing head of The Waterboys, visited Magickal Childe in January 1985, noting the "shrunken skulls", "warlocks' cloaks" and "some seriously out-there books, beyond even the usual outer limits of what I'd read myself". The hardback volume he bought that day for $9.60 had nothing at all written in it: the pages were bare, awaiting spells. Over the next few months, Scott would fill this Book Of Shadows with his own particular incantations, fervid lyrics that became the songs of his third Waterboys album, *This Is The Sea*. There were tiny, spidery declarations of intent, too, many reproduced in this hefty and compelling box set, *1985*. "Resurrect the narrative in Poetic/Wild/Impressionistic form," instructed one. "The non-linear ballad cometh. Create new acoustic electric, cold-country rock/folk music – jagged and rollingly pure as the land."

As a mystical imperative for the project, it remains an appealing one: a musical mission to channel the elements and the landscape into a sound that went beyond previous Waterboys epics like Savage Earth Heart and A Pagan Place; to achieve transcendence "Too high! Too far! Too soon!" But one of the many pleasures of these six CDs, and the 30,000-word Scott essay that accompanies them, is how rigorously *1985* exposes the creative process. These songs don't materialise, fully-formed, out of a highland mist. Their origins can be traced back through abandoned fragments and half-ideas, influences dutifully catalogued.

Scott begins trying out songs in Parkgate Studios, Battle, on February 28, 1985, and one of them is a brief, upbeat piano sketch called The Mercenary And The Samaritan. That tune in turn has been salvaged from an older song, A Boy In Black Leather, written in 1979 for Scott's first band, Another Pretty Face. The next day, however, the same piano groove has migrated somewhere else, settling in behind a lyric started by Scott in New York a month earlier. Over nine minutes, you can hear him working towards an epiphany until, around seven minutes in, the graft pays off and the song evolves into its recognisable form – The Whole Of The Moon.

This sort of forensic study of an album's genesis, even an album as good as *This Is The Sea*, obviously isn't for everyone, and if you just want to hear many of the terrific songs that didn't make the final cut – Then You Hold Me, The Waves, the gently New Order-ish Even The Trees Are Dancing – the 2-CD edition that came out in 2004 might suffice. But the diligence and candour of Scott is striking, from the point he begins his notes, perhaps unnecessarily, "My memory is good." Mapping out the record's gestation through various sessions, demos and live tracks, he is careful to acknowledge his sources.

Sleek White Schooner, for instance, is left off the album because Scott feels it's too derivative of Echo & The Bunnymen, and there's certainly something of an overdriven Killing Moon to it, though regular Waterboys touchstones the E Street Band (Anto Thistlethwaite's Clemons-esque sax prominent) and the Patti Smith Group feel more noteworthy. Glassy, chiming textures learned from Steve Reich give many tracks, including This Is The Sea itself, an otherworldly air. If *This Is The Sea* has long been seen as the album that could've made The Waterboys the next U2, Scott has spent four decades deconstructing that idea, and here his efforts become even more precise. The linear dynamics of the title track come thrumming from The Velvet Underground's Heroin, especially noticeable on the faster versions, including one with Tom Verlaine cranking away on lead guitar. The one-note piano line of Medicine Bow, meanwhile, is nailed as a direct descendant of John Cale's work on I Wanna Be Your Dog.

That piano line is played by Karl Wallinger, soon to leave The Waterboys and form World Party, and it's the volatile relationship between him and Scott that forms another key narrative on *1985*. Long, stoned sessions at Seaview, Wallinger's home studio in central London, prove inventive. A first instrumental take on The Pan Within is a gorgeous meeting of aesthetics, with Scott – organic, gestural – on piano and guitar, and Wallinger providing rubbery, funky synth bass and drumbox. Both are besotted with Prince, sampling a live bootleg of his cheering crowd on Theme, singing Paisley Park together to test microphone levels in the studio.

One of four versions of Beverly Penn here departs from its usually Springsteenish brawn to become arch synth-pop, while Towers Open Fire features programmed voluntaries weirdly reminiscent of Van Halen's Jump. Wallinger wants to add synthesizers galore; Scott likes the ethereal potential of electronics but wants to avoid sounding too much a product of the 1980s. For all of Wallinger's technological genius, it's his vintage musicality that impresses Scott most: the version of Medicine Jack that ends up on the B-side of The Whole Of The Moon is a Britbeat R&B stomp propelled by Wallinger going the full Stevie Winwood on organ.

As Wallinger disengages, however, a new foil for Scott arrives while *This Is The Sea* is being completed in July 1985: an Irish fiddler called Steve Wickham adds pizzicato to The Pan Within, and soon becomes integral to The Waterboys. By November, Wickham is steering an ecstatic new version of This Is The Sea, retitled Behold The Sea, for a Radio 1 session. "I may decide – and probably will – to head off into faraway places, other lifetimes, to seek the lands of other creatures, other ways of thinking," Scott has already written in his book of spells. "I may jump out of this boat, swim awhile, and set out upon a new destination." *This Is The Sea* has been out for two months, but already the course for the next Waterboys phase is being set: a journey into the world of traditional Irish music that will result in 1988's remarkable *Fisherman's Blues*.

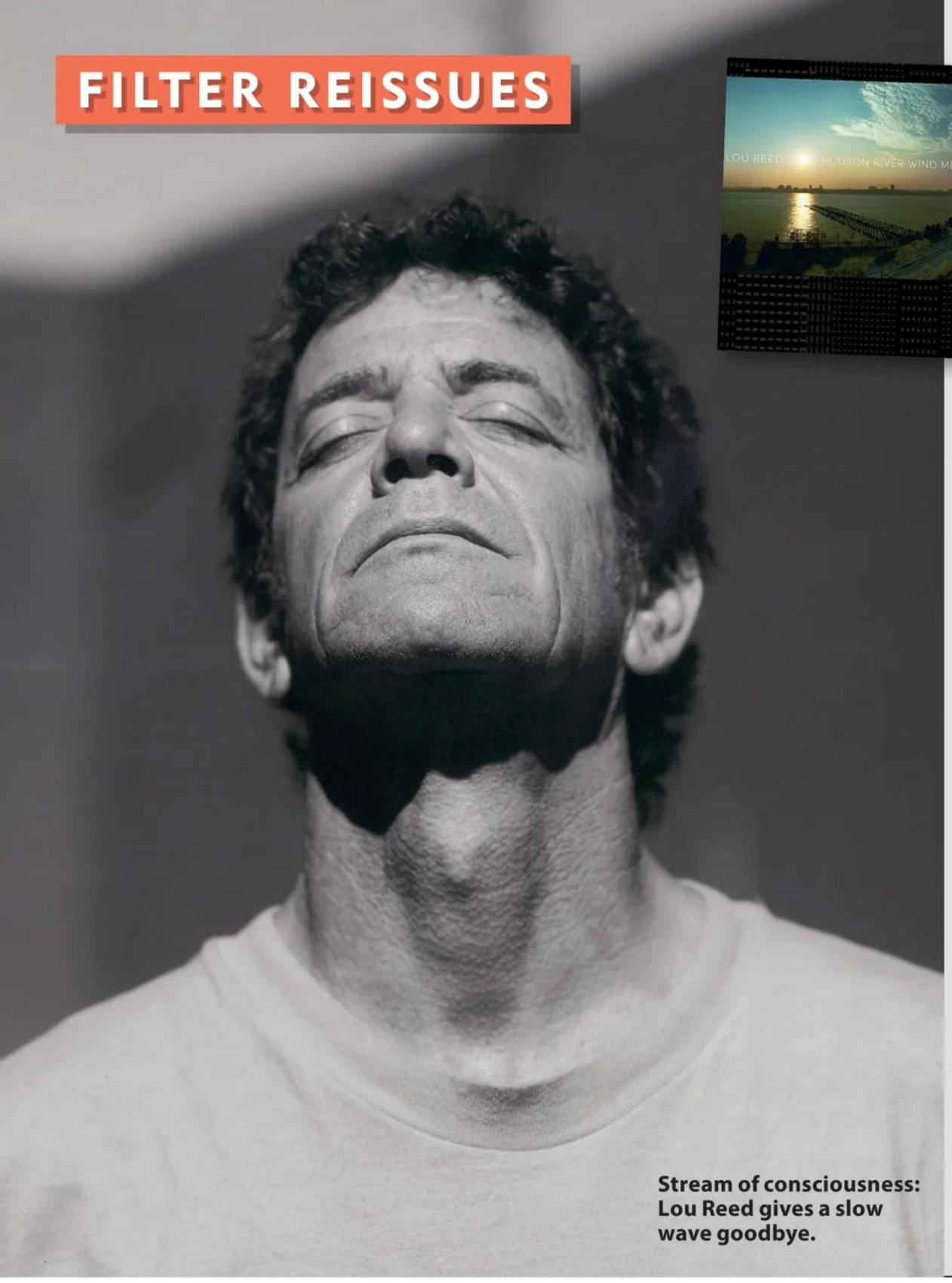
"One of the many pleasures of these six CDs is how rigorously *1985* exposes the creative process."

Lynn Goldsmith/Getty, Getty

BACK STORY: BOB'S BOYS

● Bob Dylan's influence is everywhere on *1985*, as Scott warms up with Bob songs from bootlegs (Death Is Not The End), pastiches him on his answerphone message (I Am Not Here) and recruits Steve Wickham as his very own Scarlet Rivera. The band actually jammed with Dylan during a late 1985 London session helmed by Dave Stewart, and reconstructed the instrumental the next day at a rehearsal where Karl Wallinger's replacement Guy Chambers (later to be Robbie Williams' creative foil) is blooded. That lost Dylan tune – the soulful, loping Meridian West – appears here for the first time in any form.

Deep sea diving: The Waterboys' Mike Scott (pictured in 1985) was on a musical mission to channel the elements and the landscape to achieve transcendence.



Stream of consciousness: Lou Reed gives a slow wave goodbye.

Lou Reed

★★★★

Hudson River Wind Meditations

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC. CD/DL/LP

Think *Metal Machine Music*, re-imagined for the Dream House.

WHEN LOU REED issued his hour-long clutch of revolving drones on a small DIY label in 2006, it was largely ignored, a Tai Chi trifle from a sexagenarian struggling with his health. But when *Hudson River Wind Meditations* became Reed's final solo album after his 2013 death, the set engendered new poignancy, a slow wave goodbye from a departing colossus. Amid our endless acceleration, stigmas around New Age philosophising or ambient escapism have corroded into a patina of cool, too, no longer an OutKast. Thing is, Reed's slow-motion pieces were interesting from the start, their density and sculptural finesse making them feel like koans, worth revisiting for new insight. "We must be quiet and going on at the same time," Laurie Anderson says during an illuminating conversation with journalist Jonathan Cott in this loving reissue. It is a fitting epitaph for Reed's generous states of grace, well worth the time it takes to sit within them.

Grayson Haver Currin

Colin Newman

★★★

Bastard

SWIM. CD/DL/LP

Vinyl debut for Wire singer's instrumental set from 1997. Double CD includes rare/unreleased tracks.

From his tenure in Wire onwards, Newman has been defined by a post-pop melodic touch and a restlessly experimental spirit. For his fourth solo album *Bastard*, his approach was: "What if we subverted the whole 'bloke from Wire' thing – a Colin Newman album without any actual songs?" He did much the same on 1981's instrumental set, *Provisionally Titled The Singing Fish*, but *Bastard* – in cahoots with his wife Malka Spigel (of Israeli-Belgian post-punks Minimal Compact) – reflects the myriad styles of '90s dance music. Sticky mirrors breakbeat, likewise Slowfast's high-BPM gabba, G-Deep's minimal techno and Turn's drum'n'bass. At the time, Spigel was more acquainted with beats than Newman, but neither had ever made dance music, so *Bastard* is a fascinating, er, bastardisation of the genre; more of a post-rock experiment than a playlist that you would want to dance to.

Martin Aston

Pete Dello And Friends

★★★★

Into Your Ears

HANKY PANKY. CD/DL

Honeybusman's holiday: deluxe treatment for mournful pop curio.

The Zombies' *Odessey And Oracle* set a high bar for pop-psych underachievement when it dribbled into the new release racks in 1968, but the lone solo LP from ex-Honeybus man Pete Dello runs it close. Gawky, romantic, and featuring an incongruous Roger Dean sleeve, 1971's *Into Your Ears* has been lovingly expanded to two CDs with extra demos and overlooked singles sides, re-emerging as a lost giant of post-Beatles pop. The mournful Do I Still Figure In Your Life was later recorded by Joe Cocker among others, but Dello's cutie-pie tendencies are stronger on the *Revolver*-esque It's The Way or On A Time Said Sylvie. Fans of Effervescing Elephant nastiness may appreciate the insect duel depicted on Harry The Earwig, but if Dello's muse skews winsome, closer Arise Sir Henry stands testament to his mighty harmonies. For fans of UK Kaleidoscope or UK Nirvana, a toy-town juggernaut.

Jim Wirth

Julian Schnabel

The Black Crowes

★★★★

The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion (Super Deluxe)

UMR. CD/DL/LP

1992's rock'n'soul landmark gets deservedly lavish makeover.

A chunky aperitif for the Robinson brothers' excellent comeback LP, *Happiness Bastards* (see page 58), it's a surprise the Crowes' second album has never received the box set treatment before. Across four vinyl records or three CDs, the focus is more on what came after rather than before the album: so no demos, but five punchy live-in-the studio versions for an unreleased doc, and a Houston live gig from early 1993, both of which make explicit how effortlessly these songs flowed from unadulterated takes to extended jams; Remedy stretches, deliciously, for 12 minutes in Houston. Elsewhere among the 19 extra tracks, B-side cover versions (Ry Cooder, Dylan) emphasise the Crowes' good taste beyond the usual hard rock remit, and a Stonesy vamp through Ann Peebles' 99 Pounds is a useful find (a longer version was one of two bonus cuts on a 1998 reissue). Meanwhile the original album, crisply remastered, remains fantastic.

John Mulvey

Mal Waldron & Terumasa Hino

★★★★

Reminicent Suite

BBE MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Vital 1973 jazz union of American and Japanese jazzmasters.

Back in 2009, during the Golden Age of music blogs, this writer downloaded some 20 albums by the great New York jazz pianist Mal Waldron. They were a revelation. Waldron's playing was dark, cyclical, ritualistic, vibrant exercises in a kind of proto-motorik demon improv: anti-spiritual jazz. I tracked down what I could, but at least one album, recorded in Japan with Terumasa Hino's astonishing neo-bop quintet, remained too expensive and elusive. Now, thanks to BBE it is available to all. Beginning as a repeated Waldron vamp, the opening track is rapidly lifted skyward by Hino's screeching psych trumpet, Takeo Uematsu's wailing sax and the heavyweight rhythm section of Motohiko Hino and Isao Suzuki. Track two, Black Forest, begins as a piece of Japanese folk percussion before Waldron and the quintet manhandle it into an unfettered blast of downtown Ellingtonian euphoria. Wild, exhilarating and delirious, this is post-bop jazz at its absolute flawless peak.

Andrew Male

Earl Young

★★★★

Groove Machine: The Earl Young Drum Sessions

KENT. CD/DL/LP

Spotlight on MFSB and Salsoul Orchestra's rhythmist.

As the drummer with MFSB, Earl Young set '70s soul's rhythmic pulse, his four-to-the-floor style driving the era-defining cuts coming out of Philadelphia's Sigma Sound. He'd started out a decade earlier in The Volcanos, a five-piece who became The Trammps, a line-up of which he still helms. Both groups feature on this cherry-pick of his work, the first-named with 1965's unfussy dancer Storm Warning, the second with 1975's Penguin At The Big Apple/Zing! Went The Strings Of My Heart (Medley). The O'Jays' Backstabbers and Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes' The Love I Lost (Part 1) cover peak-era Philly; rarer material comes from The Ambassadors with 1969 gospel tune I Ain't Got The Love Of One Girl (On My Mind) and Charles Mann, whose 1973's Do It Again is top quality yacht-soul.

Lois Wilson

90 Day Men

★★★

We Blame Chicago

NUMERO GROUP. DL/LP

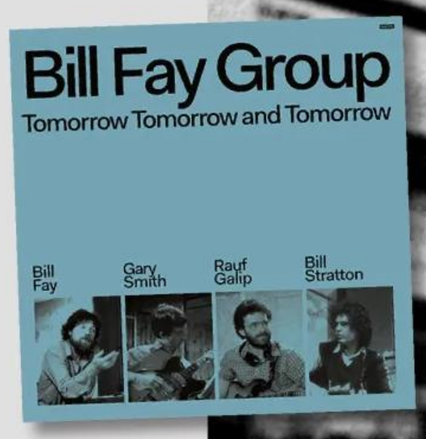
Almost 30 years ago, four Midwest kids got weirder.

For the last few years, Numero Group's 900 Line has returned a spate of overlooked or out-of-print '90s titles to circulation, from the creeping Codeine to the kinetic Karate. They push past the millennial threshold with this dutifully deluxe set that gathers most every action from 90 Day Men, a riotous post-hardcore band that shifted into knotty Genesis Lite mode during its decade and after a westward move from St Louis to Chicago. Those early days brim with tough highlights, like the slashing riff of Sink Potemken or the sprints, stops, and surges of the defiant Missouri Kids Cuss. Their arty latter days weren't without fascinating fruits, either, especially the forlorn beauty of When Your Luck Runs Out from 2004's *Panda Park*. But neither the music nor Tim Kinsella's lengthy oral history make the argument that this is more than a piece of a place and time, largely forgotten because it's somewhat forgettable. It can't all be essential, can it?

Grayson Haver Currin

Plan E

Beefed up anthology of prophetic songwriter's leanest times. By Jim Wirth.



Into *Tomorrow*: Bill Fay keeps the faith.

Bill Fay Group

★★★★

Tomorrow, Tomorrow And Tomorrow

SECRETLY CANADIAN. CD/DL/LP

"AFTER ALL these years I emerged from the darkness," sang Bill Fay on Isles Of Sleep sometime around the turn of the 1980s, a spasm of spiritual revelation that somehow anticipated the Londoner's resurrection as a Jeff Tweedy and Jim O'Rourke-endorsed outsider artist in the 2000s.

Now expanded with bonus versions, this collection of scraps recorded from 1978-81 previously surfaced in 2005, at a time when Fay's first albums – *Bill Fay* (1970) and *Time Of The Last Persecution* (1971) – were starting to be feted as minor masterpieces. Since then, Fay has made three excellent records for Dead Oceans – *Life Is People* (2012), *Who Is The Sender?* (2015) and *Countless Branches* (2020) – his understated songs of end-of-days despair, religious rapture and eternally-springing hope proving to be better suited to the apocalyptic mood of the 21st century than they were to the golden age of James Taylor.

If there was precious little audience for Fay's first albums, at least two people took an interest; Bill Stratton and Gary Smith writing to Decca to enquire whether there would be a follow-up to the ominous *Time Of The Last Persecution*. Eventually put in touch with the decidedly low-key singer, their jazz-oriented group Acme Quartet helped to record Fay's new songs in rehearsal spaces and cheapo studios. Labels were not interested, but Fay – who was variously working as a groundskeeper and fish packer at the time – wasn't too concerned. "I wasn't like other people, who had become part of a scene," he explained more recently. "I went back to what I had always done, which is the gift and blessing of working on music in its own right."

Like its spiritual twin, Judee Sill's cache of unreleased songs *Dreams Come True*, *Tomorrow, Tomorrow And Tomorrow* happily sets aside personal disappointments in the service of higher truths. As with Sill's The Good Ship Omega, Fay's When We Set Sail finds salvation in a world beyond where there is "no more tears, no more grief, no more shipwrecks". If Fay has only about 65 per cent of Sill's ability for death-defying chord changes, he shares a similar ear for cosmic church music (hear the sketchy harmonies laid down on his demo of Hypocrite) plus a more indulgent approach to worldly failings.

The title track's priestly *sprechgesang* offers a generous blessing to humanity; it's a less despairing parallel to Damn Life from John Cale's *Music For A New Society*. Meanwhile, faith – in man, God or both – underpins the Chris Bellish doodle Lamp Shining and the stately tribute to parents (spiritual and otherwise) We Are Raised.

No amount of remixing can conceal the impecunious circumstances from which these songs emerged, but *Tomorrow, Tomorrow And Tomorrow* stands testament to Fay's mastery of the long game. Keep going, keep believing and one day the world might see the light.

Various

★★★★

Bob Stanley & Pete Wiggs Present: Incident At A Free Festival

ACE. CD/LP

Head music: Saint Etienne duo introduce some heavy friends.

A sub-Jethro Tull *Nuggets*, this artfully-conceived set offers a cornucopia of the kind of bands that played "mid-afternoon slots at Deeply Vale, Bickershaw, Krumlin, Weeley, and Plumpton" in the early '70s – or barely broke even playing midweek slots at UK student unions. Eye-witnesses may wince at the memory of the Edgar Broughton Band's hippy war cry Out Demons Out, but if Curved Air's moody Backstreet Luv is the best (and most familiar) track here, there are plenty of grubby marvels besides: the proto-rap of Paladin's Third World or the soul-jazz-rock of Manfred Mann Chapter III's One Way Glass. Lovers of the esoteric, meanwhile, can marvel at Slowload's tastelessly-titled Big Boobs Boogie and celebrate the fact that Dave Richmond's Confunktion – recorded for a KPM library music LP – was the soundtrack to "a racy advert" for Denim aftershave. A boogie wonderland.

Jim Wirth

Bobby Darin

★★★

Commitment

DIRECTION. CD/LP

Expanded LP from Bobby's late-'60s protest singer days.

This self-penned, self-released 1969 LP maintained the folk direction established by Darin's 1966 album, *If I Were A Carpenter*, with his social conscience even further to the fore. Witnessing his friend Robert Kennedy's assassination in LA the previous year fundamentally changed Darin's priorities, as reflected in the lyrics: "How many times can you lie, boy/ How many games can you play?/Before you get down to TCB/And say what you gotta say" (Song For A Dollar). Water Color Canvas takes inspiration from Gentle On My Mind, while Maybe We Can Get It Together is a soulful plea for a better world. Some of the effects he's striving for don't quite come off, but it's a deeply personal record with its heart in the right place, now issued with four extra tracks from the original sessions.

Max Décharné

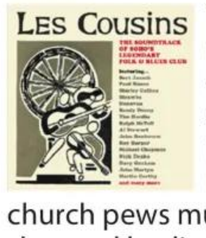
Various

★★★★

Les Cousins: The Soundtrack Of Soho's Legendary Folk & Blues Club

CHERRY RED. CD

A celebration of London's late-'60s folk underground.



Through a narrow doorway, down steep stairs into a fuggy rectangle of church pews murky with slumped bodies, Greek Street's Cousins was the metropolitan epicentre for all things folk, blues and beyond between 1965 and 1972. Launched alongside Bert Jansch's debut LP and closing as the college circuit boomed, curator Andy Matheou embraced traditional revivalists like The Watersons, country-blues students like Mike Cooper and emerging singer-songwriters like John Martyn. Cousins' tiny stage was too small for a drum kit but a pedestal for acoustic guitar maestros from John Renbourn to John James. Compiler Ian A Anderson favours wide-eyed debuts over career progression, but exhaustively reassembles Cousins' eclectic and freewheeling coterie.

Mark Cooper

Various

★★★★

Jon Savage's Ambient 90s

CAROLINE TRUE. CD/DL/LP

Venerable cultural commentator's trippy, esoteric period soundtrack.

Across a series of lovingly curated collections, writer and broadcaster Jon Savage has shone a light on lesser celebrated examples of post-punk, late-'80s/early-'90s psychedelic baggy and electronica from 1978-1982. For his newest instalment, Savage opens up the broad umbrella of '90s ambient with tunes for the main dancefloor, side room and afterparty. Tracks that helped take the edge off the unbridled hedonism of the late rave era. It extends from the hypnagogic, blissed-out groove of En-trance by Norwegian stalwart Biosphere through to Richard H Kirk – as Sandoz – with the crunching paranoic breakbeat of Limbo and on to the jangling, ravey stomp of William Orbit's Montok Point. Other celebrated acts are present (see Underworld; µ-Ziq), but the real thrill is in discovering the more obscure choices. Taking pride of place is Lobe, the nom de guerre of Scottish producer Ian Hartley, whose 1996 release Placebo builds inexorably, joyously to its trippy denouement.

Stephen Worthy

Black Inc

Soft rock: Plush's Liam Hayes taps into his peculiar creative circadian rhythm in the late-'90s; (below) Hayes's debut single and LP.

FILE UNDER...

More of less

The tentative emergence of a fine artist is revisited. By Jim Irvin.

IN 1994 a 7-inch single, Three-Quarters Blind Eyes b/w Found A Little Baby, by Plush, introduced a new old-school pop craftsman in the mode of Webb, Wilson or Bacharach, deploying a deluxe arrangement featuring horns, woodwind, mellotron and choral vocals. Said craftsman was Liam Hayes, a Chicagoan unknown quantity quickly tipped as a putative all-time great. However, the resolutely off-grid Hayes wasn't going to give up much, be it music or information. There were soon rumours he'd got lost in the Australian bush or joined a religious cult. Half-truths, as it turned out. It was four years before a second single and a debut album arrived (and four years seemed a lot longer then), but *More You Becomes You* ★★★★ (Weird Vacation) surprised anyone who'd been waiting expectantly. Those lush arrangements were absent. Apart from a couple of poignant incidents of French horn, and some double-tracked vocals, it was simply Hayes alone at the piano, an intimate, 27-minute interior monologue. Arresting, certainly, but anyone who'd loved that first single was entitled to some disappointment. Elaborate packaging included a taut paper bag which made the music fiddly to access. It all felt like a project subconsciously designed to keep potential listeners at a distance.

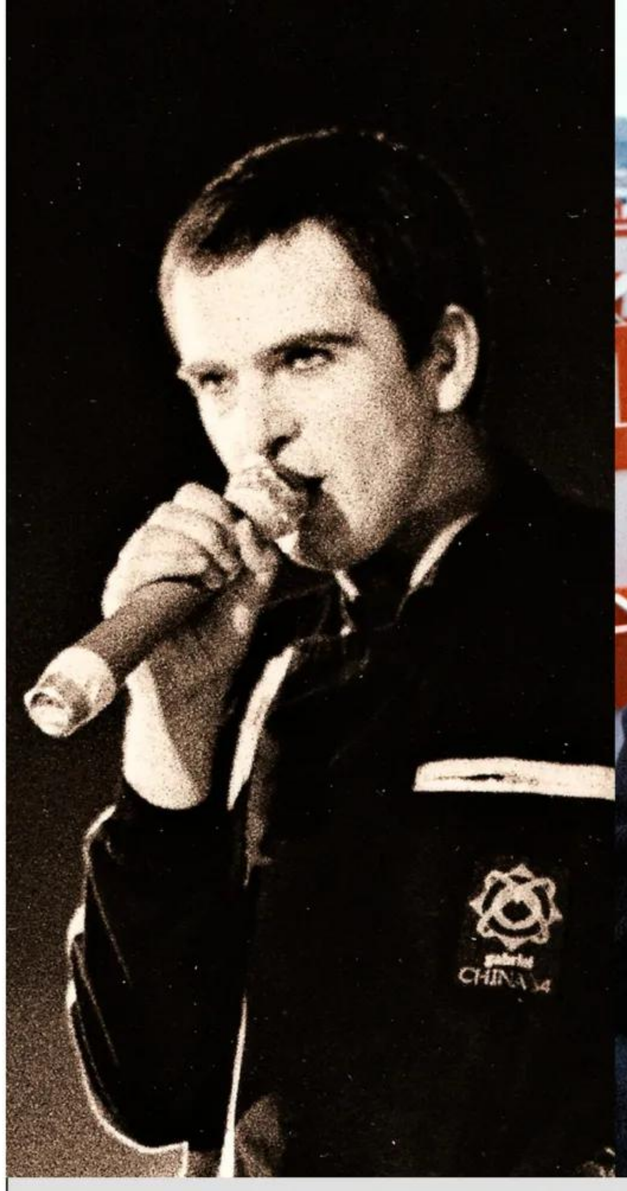
It sounded as if Hayes had simply sat down at a piano, sung rough sketches of an album-in-waiting and stood up again half an hour later. We actually hear him leave the room. In fact it was the result of months of recording, mixing and prevaricating, during which time it evolved into a kind of reflexive suite about its own creation, aware of both grace and shortcomings. The tracklist is almost irrelevant, the borders of each 'song' hazy. The first two bleed into each other, sharing a line of lyric: "I didn't know her life was so sad I'd cry." Otherwise, Virginia is just hummed melody, running straight into the title track, a sunnier version of the same idea until a series of gearshifts turns it into a medley of several discrete segments. And so it continues. On (I Didn't Know) I Was Asleep, extending the phrase "so long" foxes Hayes's pitching, he leans into his error until he's purposefully way out of tune and then cracks up laughing, fourth wall shattered. But then a beautiful little piano solo re-casts the spell. "I used to be a perfectionist," Hayes tells MOJO's John Mulvey in new sleevenotes. "I understood my predicament, but continued making the same mistakes. Eventually, though, something akin to exhaustion sets in and you look at other ways to work."

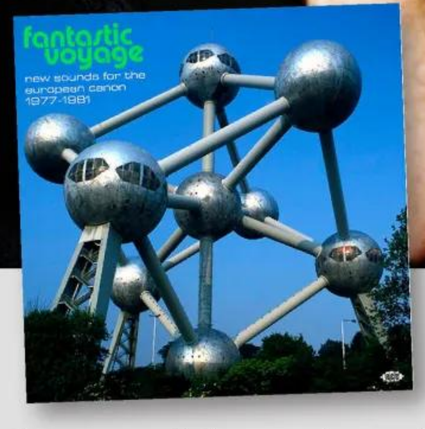
In 1998, Hayes told me that the record was a reflection of long stretches of time spent alone and his peculiar creative circadian rhythm. "I seem to alternate between periods of not really having an abundance of ideas and then having so many that I can't finish one before another comes along." Follow-up, *Fed* (2002), a fully-arranged jewel, came out on an obscure label linked to a Japanese magazine. Then Hayes issued its demos as *Underfed* (2004), implying continued uncertainty about how best to present his work. In 2009, the excellent *Bright Penny* – appearing on Manchester's tiny Broken Horse label – felt like he was comfortable in his skin at last; witness the confident, gorgeous and elaborately appointed Take A Chance. More prolific subsequently, Hayes now issues records under his own name: *Korp Sole Roller* in 2014, the garage-y *Slurrup* in 2015 and 2020's well-received *Mirage Garage*.

Though not all of it is currently streaming, there's now enough of Hayes's work out there to create your own route through this often superb catalogue – and I recommend that you do – without necessarily having to begin with this fascinating, but still confounding record, somehow 25 years old, beautifully remastered and presented in its original packaging on CD and vinyl.

"It was an intimate, 27-minute interior monologue."

Jim Newberry





Getting the *Low* down: (from left) Peter Gabriel, Ryuichi Sakamoto and Daryl Hall channel Berlin Bowie.

10cc

★★★★

20 Years: 1972-1992

EDSEL. CD

Two decades, 14-CDs, 145 tracks, one rehabilitation.

Arty, whimsical, poppy, rocky, witty, elegiac, droll, 10cc were a bundle of contradictions, who managed to be simultaneously ahead of their time and very much of it. They're still touring with original member Graham Gouldman at the helm, but this exhaustive retrospective – omitting only final LP 1995's *Mirror Mirror*, but including two rarities discs – is a reminder of a band with three Number 1 singles and five Top 10 LPs who have unfathomably slipped through the cracks of collective memory. There are two distinct phases: the first four varied, boundary pushing, idiosyncratic albums. Then, once Kevin Godley and Lol Creme left, the rest. Without their maverick tendencies, 10cc threw fewer curveballs (although since one was Dreadlock Holiday, that might have been for the best) but honed their grown-up pop, without wholly losing what made them so compelling in the first place.

John Aizlewood

Various

★★★★

Fantastic Voyage: New Sounds For The European Canon, 1977-81

ACE. CD/DL/LP

A time for *"Heroes"*: exceptional set of Bowie-flavoured esoterica.

A COMPANION to Bob Stanley's *Cafe Exil* set of the kind of esoteric Euro-rock that David Bowie and Iggy Pop might have encountered on their Berlin adventures, *Fantastic Voyage* seeks to capture echoes of *Low* and *"Heroes"* in the icy, disco-literate sounds that came after. Roxy Music recidivists can cavil about modern culture's tendency to find Bowie's influence everywhere, like some kind of thin white Where's Wally, but this set offers an embarrassment of bangers for your buck regardless. Post-punk heads may know Simple Minds' grandiose Speed Of Life-esque Theme For Great Cities or Ryuichi Sakamoto's sparky Riot In Lagos, but may not be so familiar with the icy wind of post-Krautrock change breezing through the older guard in the form of Daryl Hall's The Farther Away I Am, Peter Gabriel's No Self Control or The Walker Brothers' deranged Nite Flights. Worth it for Chaz Jankel's squelchy 3,000,000 Synths alone.

Jim Wirth

Dan Penn

★★★

The Inside Track On Bobby Purify

THE LAST MUSIC CO. CD/DL

The blueprints for an overlooked Southern soul resurrection, revealed.

The story, at least, is compelling: when Southern soul legend Dan Penn helped revive the career of Solomon Burke after the turn of the millennium, he began writing songs for a second such prospective resurrection. He needed, however, a singer. When a collaborator stumbled upon Bobby Purify belting for tips at a party, he knew he'd found his guy. Penn had worked with Purify decades earlier, long before the singer lost his sight to glaucoma and only continued singing after Ray Charles told him not to stop. The resulting 2005 LP, *Better To Have It*, never hit Burke heights, though through no fault of Purify, who died in 2022 – his singing was mighty, his tale compelling. This set pairs that out-of-print album with Penn's keyboard-and-vocal demos, making for occasionally awkward comparisons. In semi-Emitt Rhodes mode, Penn suggests accidental bedroom pop parodies, trying to climb into stuff he didn't write for his own commanding voice.

Grayson Haver Currin

The Spiders

★★★

Don't Blow Your Mind: The Mascot Sessions

OKTAY. LP

Rare studio recordings by Alice Cooper's pre-fame band.

Mop-topped, sometime Beatles parodists The Spiders started out as The Earwigs before Phoenix, Arizona label owner and TV show host Jack Curtis booked them into Floyd Ramsey's Audio Recorders to track two covers and one original for Mascot Records. Here restored in vivid high-fidelity from the original masters, the 1965 sessions comprise multiple takes of The Blackwells' Why Don't You Love Me, its Merseybeat sound very much intact, various takes on Marvin Gaye's first hit single Hitch Hike, and The Spiders' early Rolling Stones-like original Don't Blow Your Mind. The appetite/nascent talent of Cooper and fellow future-stars Glen Buxton and Dennis Dunaway is obvious, and Swiss garage rock enthusiasts Oktay have come with a handsome-looking, historically important package. An outro-groove radio ident promoting a Spiders show from the period cements the sense of time travel.

James McNair

Scott Fagan

★★★★

South Atlantic Blues

EARTH. LP

Tropical brainstorm: neglected guide to US Virgin Island life.

Thinking somewhat fondly of his upbringing in the US Virgin Islands, Scott Fagan sang on the title track to his 1968 debut "life's so easy there, you live from day to day". However, the hand-to-mouth, listless existence he described on the hard-up and horn-packed *South Atlantic Blues* presented a rather more desperate view of his upbringing in Saint Thomas. Like Judy Henske and Jerry Yester's similarly outré *Farewell Aldebaran*, Fagan's debut has morphed from bargain bin regular to cognoscenti fetish object, the singer's anguished, Scott Walker-toned vocals and the slightly incongruous *Moondance* arrangements elevating In My Head, The Carnival Is Ended and closer Madame-Moiselle from finger-poppin' club pop to something altogether weirder and wilder. "This is insane," bellows Fagan on Tenement Hall, summoning up Tim Hardin, Jimmy Webb or David Ackles at their most manic. Refreshingly uneasy listening.

Jim Wirth

Spacemen 3

★★★

Forged Prescriptions

SPACE AGE RECORDINGS. DL/LP

Out-takes from 1987's *The Perfect Prescription*.

If there's one thing estranged Spacemen Jason Pierce and Pete 'Sonic Boom' Kember can agree upon, it's their shared reticence to collaborate with their ex-manager's label, Space Age Recordings, on outtakes-mining exercises like this one. The original *The Perfect Prescription* was a creative breakthrough, with Pierce stepping up as a songwriter on the extraordinary drugs-not-God life statement Walkin' With Jesus and the beatifically swinging Come Down Easy. The former's represented here, amid disc one's reshuffled line-up of early versions, as a nasal demo from before JP had found his singing voice. If few fans would ever opt for those over the original versions, *Forged Prescriptions*' second platter carries some particular treats: a Pierce-wailed stab at Roky Erickson's pre-Elevators hit We Sell Soul, and, underscoring Spacemen 3's fixation on Lou Reed (see Ode To Street Hassle), a further Velvet Jam charged by gloriously Cro-Magnon, I Can't Stand It-style riffing.

Andrew Perry

Various

★★★★

Skyway Soul: Gary, Indiana

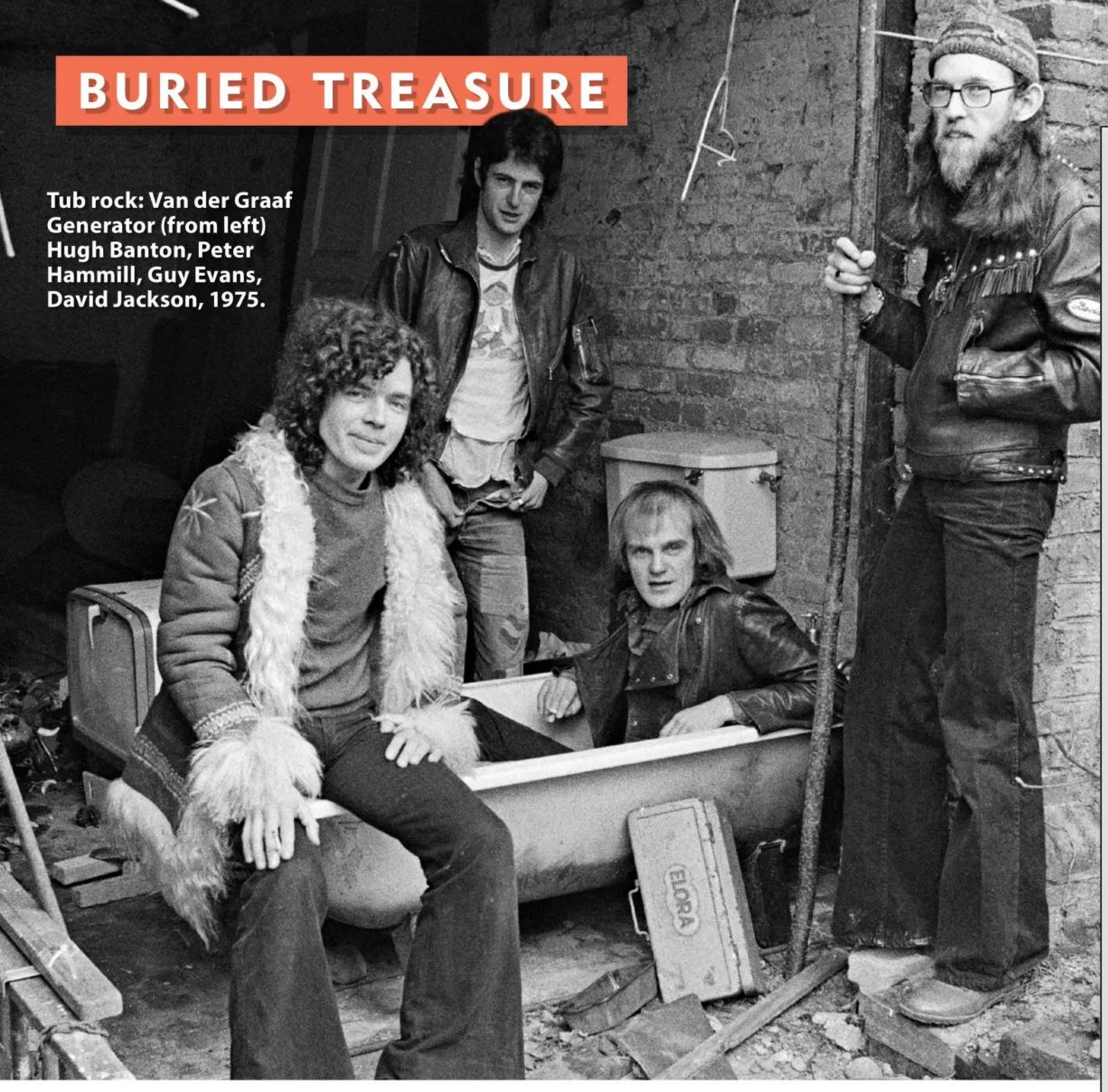
NUMERO GROUP. LP

Inspired double album of lost soul from America's home of steel.

Gary, Indiana was home to The Jackson 5 and four-time Grammy winner Deniece Williams. But this excellent two-disc compilation spotlights the no-hit wonders from the Lake County city, cherry-picking the ones with sublime voices that in a parallel universe would have been crowned kings and queens. Singers such as El Anthony, who also co-wrote his own material; 1971's We've Been In Love Too Long (originally released on Chicago label La Cindy) is a big-voiced, lush-stringed gem – an original currently fetches over £200. Then there's Nate Evans, a powerhouse testifier who'd helm a late Impressions line-up and now sings in a Temptations tribute, but on the strength of 1972's Syl Johnson-produced Main Squeeze (on Twinight) should have made it on his own terms, his powerful voice soaring then swooping over ecstatic brass stabs and an easy going groove.

Lois Wilson

Alamy, Getty (2)



Tub rock: Van der Graaf Generator (from left) Hugh Banton, Peter Hammill, Guy Evans, David Jackson, 1975.

CREDITS

Tracks: Nadir's Big Chance/The Institute Of Mental Health, Burning/Open Your Eyes/Nobody's Business/Been Alone So Long/Pompeii/ Shingle Song/ Airport/People You Were Going To/ Birthday Special/ Two Or Three Spectres

Personnel: Peter Hammill (voice, acoustic and electric guitars, Hohner clavinet, piano, bass), David Jackson (saxophone), Hugh Banton (Hammond organ, piano, bass), Guy Evans (drums, percussion)

Producer: Peter Hammill, Pat Moran (engineer), Mike Stone (mixing)

Recorded: Rockfield Studios, Monmouthshire Trident Studios, London

Released: February 1975

Chart peak: N/A

Current availability: Virgin/Charisma CD (2006 Remaster)

This Is A Low

Disinterred: a terror-prog eminence espies punk with three chords and a howl.

Peter Hammill
Nadir's Big Chance

CHARISMA, 1975

"MY ALTER EGO, Nadir, took me over," read Peter Hammill's handwritten notes for his fifth solo LP, released as punk began to seethe and prog waned: "this loud, aggressive perpetual 16-year-old… I can only submit, gladly, and play his music."

To Hammill listeners, notions of possession and exorcism were not new: as leader of cabbalistic art-rock hydra Van der Graaf Generator from 1967 to 1972, he'd turned psychological disturbance into an art form. In late 1974, VdGG reconvened, with one more Hammill solo record as a starter for their second lease of life.

The players – drummer Guy Evans, organist Hugh Banton and saxophonist David Jackson – would be led by Hammill into different musical terrain from such check-the-exits VdGG mindbombs as *Pawn Hearts* or *H To He, Whom Am The Only One*. "I'd liken it to [1971 solo LP] *Fool's Mate*, which was also comprised of older songs that were never going to be recorded by Van der Graaf Generator," says Hammill today. "The idea of an alter-ego of Rikki Nadir descending was true to an extent. It was something at my shoulder, to be simple but not stupid, harking back to when I was young and listening to The Who or Eddie Cochran or Muddy Waters."

It was recorded at Rockfield Studios in Monmouthshire from December 1 to 7, 1974. "It was good and quick," says Hammill, whose leather jacket and straight-leg jeans contrasted with his bandmates' Afghan coats, woolly hats and flared strides. "Rockfield was a great studio – very much a working farm, you'd see cows going past – and Kingsley [Ward, co-owner] was a very charming host. Also, it was the first time that I was kind of equal instrumentalist [in the group], playing, particularly, more electric guitar. I gained confidence from doing *Nadir*. As it was a solo record, the responsibility was mine – the other chaps were having fun really."

It sounds like it: the chugging, sneering aggro-glam title song expresses omni-directional rage and advises, "come on everybody, smash the system." But if *Nadir's Big Chance* has been shorthanded as Hammill's punk LP – partly due to fan John Lydon playing tracks off it on Tommy Vance's Capital Radio show in July '77 – it's more complicated than that. Track two finds reality phasing abruptly into the psychedelic on The Institute Of Mental Health, Burning, which Hammill and co-writer Judge Smith played at Roger Eagle's Magic Village club when they were students in Manchester. Onwards to Open Your Eyes, and we're in a sax-driven organ stomper, as Hammill hails the long-gone Derby Locarno of his youth (it was, intriguingly, written on the Hammond organ of doomed R&B/jazz occultist Graham Bond).

"We were all the same age so everyone understood making a nod to soul music, to ballads, to the kind of three-chord rock stuff that we'd all come out of," says Hammill. "Short songs, get in, do it, verse/chorus, verse/chorus, blah – out!"

To these projections of wild youth, add themes of farewell and loss. The vengeful, grinding Nobody's Business dissects what happens when mammon smothers art: bereft weeper Been Alone So Long considers a world without love, and Pompeii – a poem by the teenage Hammill – jazzily meditates on how all things will one day end. A double-blow of anguish, Shingle Song ("there is nothing in my heart but pain") and Airport seem conjoined, as the narrator considers the end of an affair, and then goes to watch his love object fly away ("Already you've left me/And cannot bear to look back, can you?").

Punk riffing and gleeful anger return on the housewrecking Birthday Special, and to prowling record biz j'accuse Two Or Three Spectres. The latter song takes aim at the record business in its most carnivorous and soul-sapping form, with swipes at the music press, groupiedom and nose candy. It ends in a stadium gig and wild cheering: "Ten thousand arms are raised, just like the Hitler Youth," howls Hammill, "might think you were at Nuremberg, if it weren't for all the groovers."

"There are elements of, 'Well, this is kind of what happens inside trying to make it,'" says Hammill of the album's closer. "That kind of dissing the whole idea, that this is going wrong somewhere. Maybe that's the most punk element, that sticking a finger up to the industry. It's beginning to set out a position that I've carried forward. Of course, we were about to try to be VdGG again and we genuinely did want to be successful! It's always complicated."

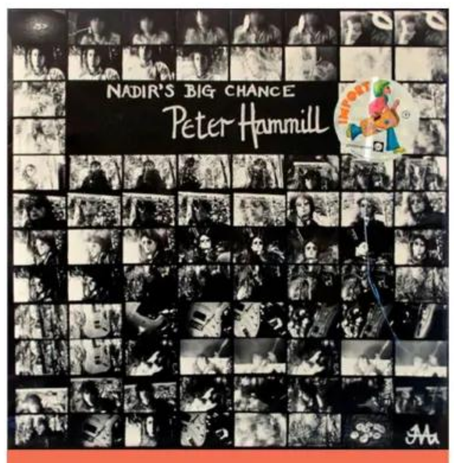
Birthday Special was released as a single, credited to Rikki Nadir, but by May Van der Graaf were back on the road, with the mighty *Godbluff* following in October. "We played in a more visceral and direct way, I think, as a result of having done *Nadir*," says Hammill. "It fired us up again, this idea of just playing and not being overly intellectual. VdGG has this slightly, erm, cerebral reputation, but always there's been this element of chaotic, go-for-it, wa-hey! Had we not done *Nadir*, then *Godbluff* would have been very different."

In 1978 the group disbanded again, with Nadir's Big Chance appearing in sore-throated glory closing the live farewell album *Vital*. When Hammill returned to solo work with that year's *The Future Now*, Rikki Nadir got a namecheck on the V's-flicking Pushing Thirty: Nadir even released another single, 1979's peculiar The Polaroid. Is he still there?

"He is still, somewhere around in my heart and soul," says Hammill, who confirms he's working on new solo material and that Van der Graaf is a "never say never" prospect. "I hope I can still connect with that chap, because he's the one who was woken up by music at 15, 16, going, 'Wow, this is just the most fantastic stuff, I'd love to do that.' I still have a love of doing music, and so to that extent, he's still there."

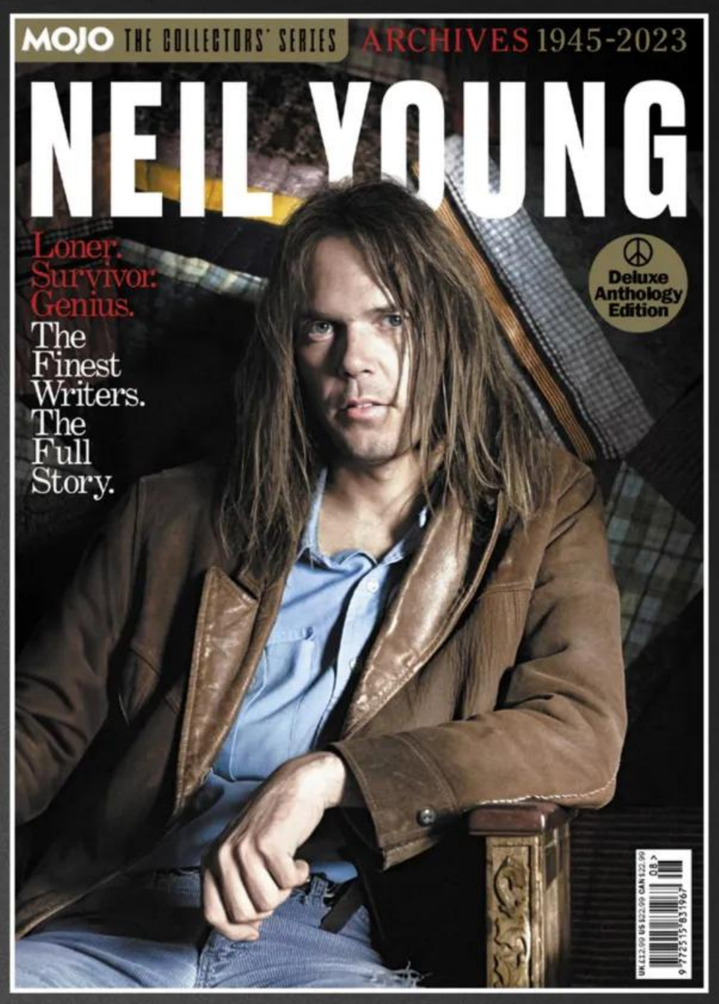
Ian Harrison

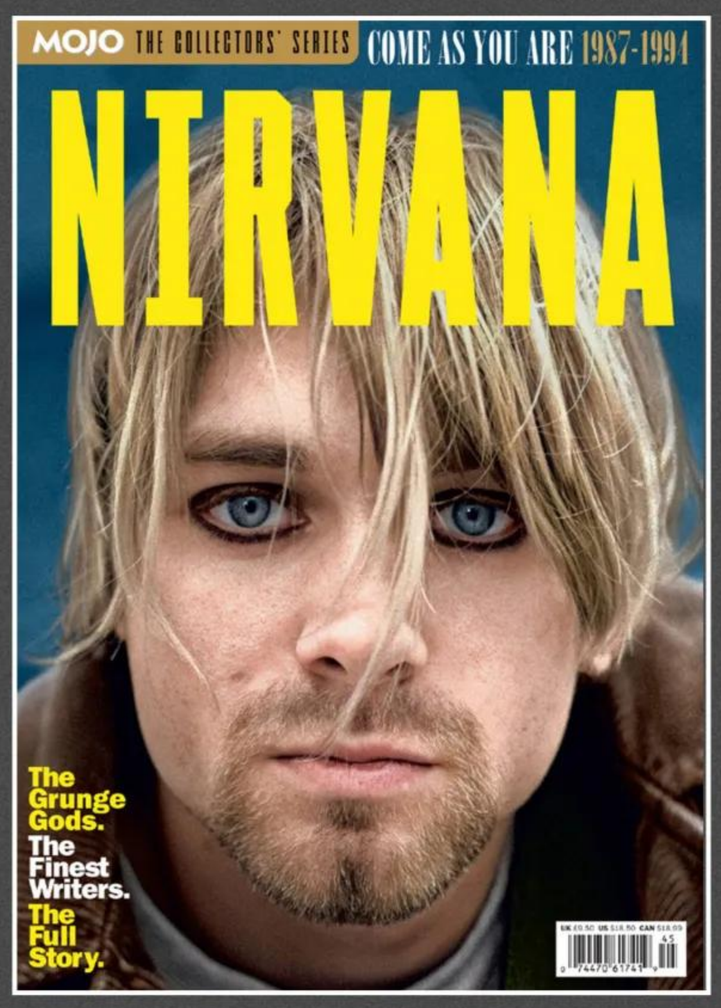
Peter Hammill's In A Foreign Town/ Out Of Water 2023 is out now on Cherry Red.

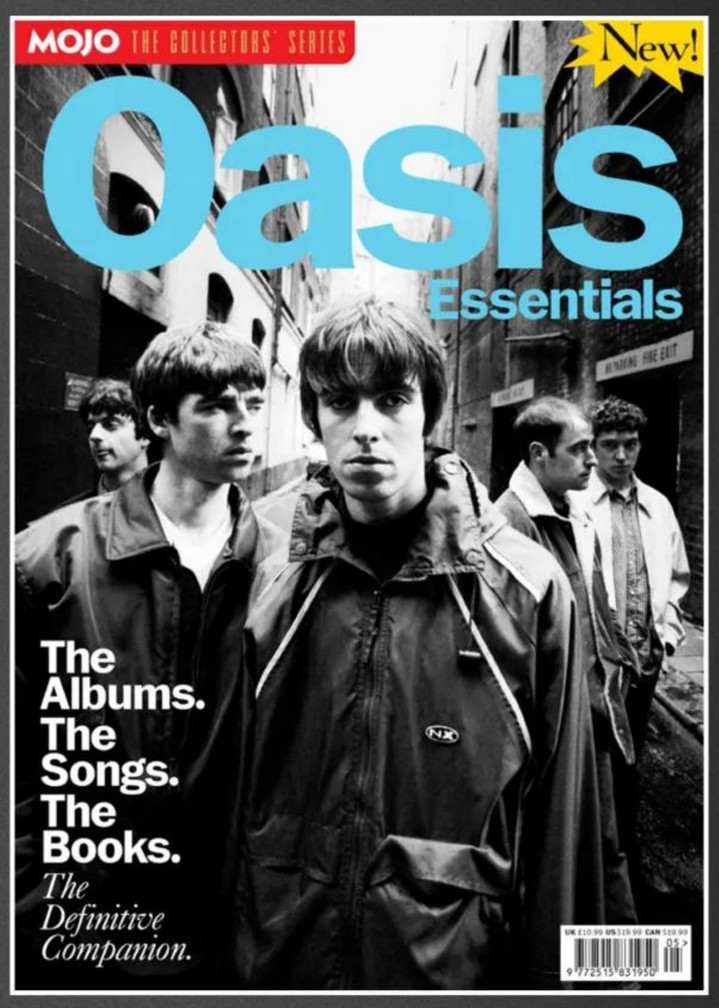


"Short songs, get in, do it, verse/chorus, verse/chorus, blah – out!"
PETER HAMMILL

Michael Putland/Getty







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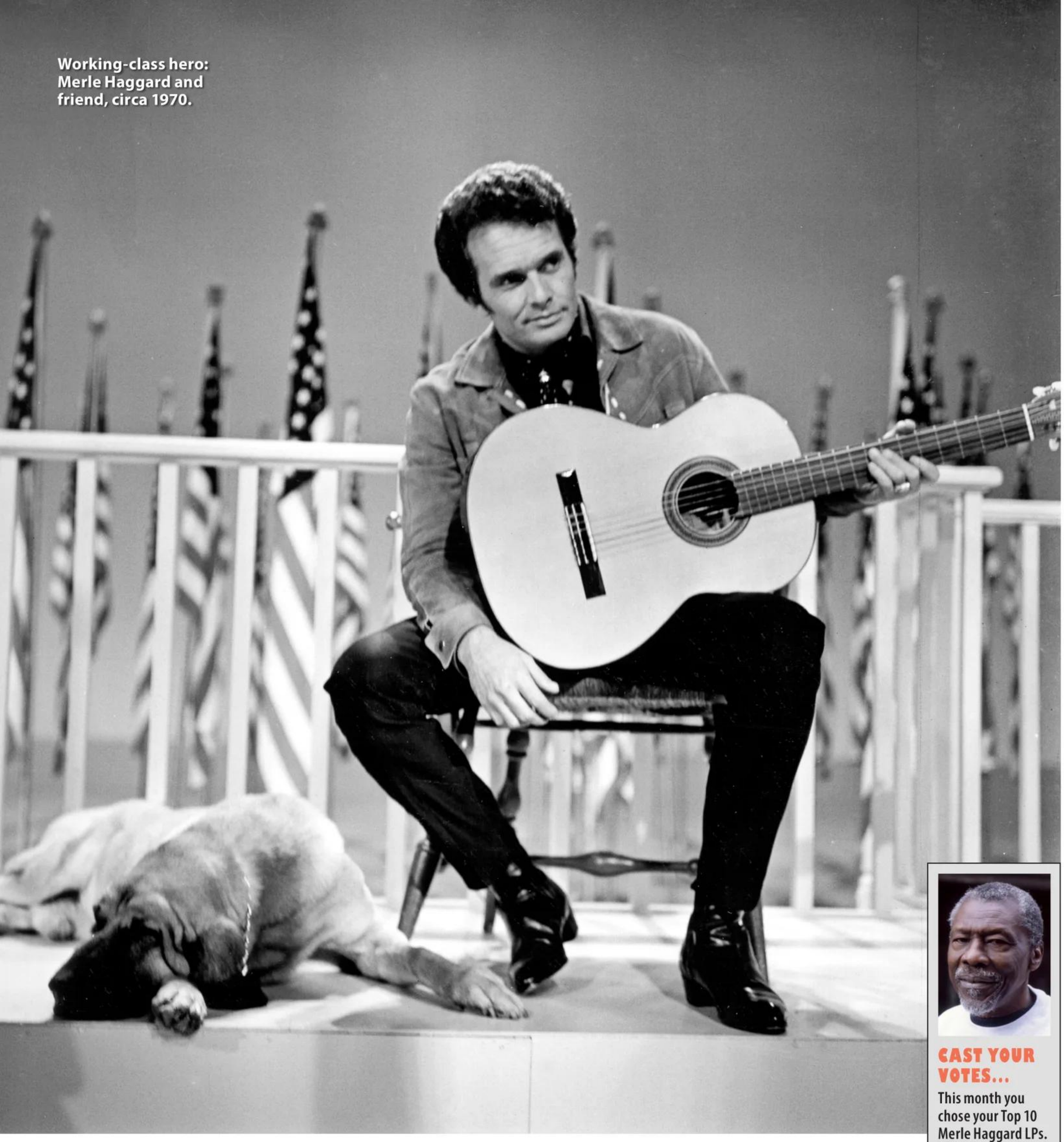


Working-class hero: Merle Haggard and friend, circa 1970.

Merle Haggard

Just shy of a Bakersfield dozen.
By Andrew Male.

THE FIRST THING most people know about Merle Haggard is his million-selling 1969 signature song, Okie From Muskogee. A seeming attack on liberal hippies and Vietnam war protestors, it saw the 33-year-old California-born country singer held up as a figurehead of right-wing working-class America. But the song was as much a satirical parody as righteous howl of protest, and while it undeniably secured some much-desired wealth and stardom for Haggard, it presents a distinctly misleading portrait of the man.

Born to Oklahoma migrants James and Flossie Haggard in 1937, and raised by his mother after his father died from a brain haemorrhage, Merle spent his childhood in and out of juvenile detention. Following an encouraging backstage encounter with honky-tonk crooner Lefty Frizzell in 1951, he began to pursue a musical career, working the oil fields by day and playing Bakersfield clubs by night. There followed a brief, three-year interval when Haggard served time in San Quentin prison but in 1962 he had signed to Fuzzy Owen's Tally Records, releasing his first single, a maudlin Nashville-style dirge called Singin' My Heart Out. However, it was in his first significant hit, a 1965 cover of Liz Anderson's (My Friends Are Gonna Be) Strangers that you hear the seeds of Haggard's future success, that weary yet alluring voice, a curious mix of conviction and pathos, playing games of lyrical intent over a rock-a-bye, honky-tonk rhythm. Signed with Capitol soon after, Haggard began assembling The Strangers, a crack team of musicians who'd help him craft his unique spin on Buck Owens' Bakersfield sound, with elements of soul, gospel, blues and jazz incorporated into the original mix of twin-picked Telecasters, big beat, fiddle, and up-front pedal steel.

To hear Haggard perfect that blueprint in the late '60s and early '70s is to hear an artist push at the boundaries of his genre. Songs of freedom, escape and the working man, positioned in some elusive space between fiction and autobiography, forever reaching for a country music version of Werner Herzog's "ecstatic truth", a deeper kind of autobiographical sincerity that can only be found through stylisation and storytelling.

"Songs of freedom, escape and the working man… a deeper kind of autobiographical sincerity."

Getty (2)

CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Merle Haggard LPs. Next month we want your Studio One Reggae Top 10. Send selections via X, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Studio One Reggae' and we'll print the best comments.

10 Merle Haggard
Working Man's Journey

CRACKER BARREL, 2007

You say: "I always encourage folks to check out *Working Man's Journey* as among his most underrated, too-little-heard efforts." @dlcantwell, via X

Assembled for the US Cracker Barrel restaurant chain and only previously available in their 'Old Country Store' gift shops, this is a grab-bag of six new songs and six re-workings, recorded in stripped-down, laid-back fashion with a bunch of Haggard stalwarts. The classics have a nice, lived-in feel but it's the new songs that startle, especially post-Katrina blues Stormy New Orleans ("Snakes and things coming through the window screen"), an anti-war song aimed at the Bush administration (In The Mountains To Forget), the beautiful, valedictory Songman and the bittersweet C'mon Sixty-Five.

4 Merle Haggard And The Strangers
…Presents His 30th Album

CAPITOL, 1974

You say: "Country's *Sgt. Pepper*. Every track dazzles." Steven Gaydos @HighSierraMan, via X

The title signalled modesty but also fatigue. For as well as being a masterclass in everything that had made Hag and The Strangers untouchable, *…Presents His 30th Album* is also a last gasp of creativity before five years of burnout. On the surface, the songs could be mistaken as witty exercises in old-time, western swing, ballads and gospel. But, as is standard with Haggard, these are multi-layered songs with so much else going on under the surface, stories of forsaken and rejected men running from trouble and the law, just about holding things together, freedom forever out of reach.

9 Merle Haggard If I Could Only Fly

ANTI-, 2000

You say: "More subtle than Johnny Cash's *American Recordings*, but just as moving." Jason Schneider @JSchneiderTO, via X

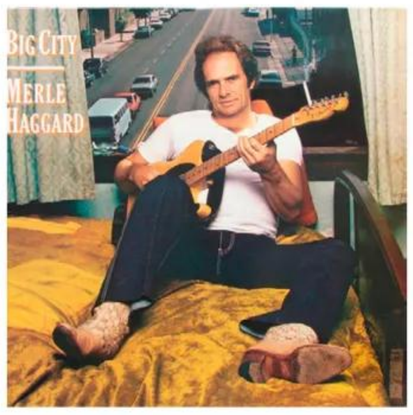
After suffering a decade of debt and career decline, shackled to a small-time Nashville outfit that refused to release his records, in 2000 Haggard found himself on punk indie Anti- and releasing his best LP since 1981's *Big City*. The 63-year-old had just got clean and the album's opening words – "Watching while some old friends do a line/Holding back the 'want to' in my own addicted mind" – zones in perfectly on the record's mood, caught somewhere between nostalgia for the honky-tonk good times and a bone-tired relief that they're behind him. Haggard's rough, life-worn voice, laid bare by the unadorned production, lends an autobiographical richness to songs that vary from the truly great to the merely very good.

8 Merle Haggard And The Strangers Someday We'll Look Back

CAPITOL, 1971

You say: "If I had to play a Merle LP to a sceptic, this is the one I'd choose. It's all there." Carl Bossard, via mojo4music.com

The surprise success of 1969's Okie From Muskogee meant 1970 was a year of accolades, with Haggard making artist of the year in both the Country Music Association (CMA) and Academy Of Country Music (ACM) Awards. He followed that with this peerless blend of folk, lonesome country and lazy honky-tonk blues. To luxuriate in this LP is to understand the beauty and craft of the Countrypolitan sound; how dulcet strings, angelic harmonies and hypnotic melodies can pull you into a doomed, mean-hearted world of poverty, crime, betrayal, and sweet-voiced if unreliable narrators.



7 Merle Haggard Big City

EPIC, 1981

You say: "All Merle's albums are worth hearing. *Big City* is outstanding, even with his high bar." Richard Baxstrom @Baxstrom, via X

"I'm tired of this dirty old city," sings Haggard on the mega-selling title track of this lazily-perfect album, but he may as well have been singing that he was tired of travelling, tired of America, tired of life and longing for a return to a mythic past of hazy memories that probably never existed in the first place; "back before Elvis and… the Vietnam war". Yet, even in those lines (from the dangerously proto-Trump, Are The Good Times Really Over (I Wish A Buck Was Still Silver)), you sense Haggard's characters are more likely romantic fantasists than rebel rousers and, thanks to the calming, near-narcotic production of Merle and Lewis Talley, most of the album unfolds like a sweet, delusional dream.

6 Merle Haggard Back To The Barrooms

MCA, 1980

You say: "A boozin' country classic. Pour a drink, stick it on and sink into your misery ye dirty dog." Iffy Pop @iffypopireland, via X

Chiefly built around drinking songs and the lachrymose romantic mindset of the habitual boozer, this is essentially a Merle Haggard concept album. The production is 'urban cowboy' clean, purpose-built for the barroom jukeboxes of the day, while the lyrics are dark, bluesy and pensive, purpose built for the barroom drunks of the day. If the album has a key text it's not the gloomily obstinate I Don't Want To Sober Up Tonight but rather Leonard, his biographical tribute to his longtime friend Leonard Sipes, AKA songwriter Tommy Collins. A song that, in the lyric "I saw what booze and pills could really do", finds the dark human truth of every barroom ballad.

5 Merle Haggard And The Strangers Pride In What I Am

CAPITOL, 1969

You say: "Best captures the various dynamics of the Bakersfield Sound; both the displaced Oklahoma/Texas culture dumped in the Cal desert." Ian Walker @fenlandgent, via X

Born out of Nashville country, Texas swing, mariachi, the blues, and over-amplified Fender Telecasters, by 1969 Merle Haggard's Bakersfield/Nashville West Sound had been picked up by the Stones, Dylan, Linda Ronstadt, and Gram Parsons. And if those are the sounds you like then you need *Pride In What I Am* in your collection. Promoted with an advert that read "Country music is white folk's soul! And Merle Haggard is the soul of the country!" It's a perfect country-soul album; gentle, laid-back, weird and beautiful, yet undercut with a dust-bowl-dry bitterness.

3 Merle Haggard Same Train, A Different Time

CAPITOL, 1969

You say: "To call this a tribute to Jimmie Rodgers is to do it a disservice. It's more a reinvigoration – every song treated with such respect that it blossoms into something greater." Geoff @asgardroot, via X

A double-LP salute to the Father Of Country Music, Jimmie Rodgers. Complete with between-song narration, *Same Train…* wisely refuses any acts of impersonation or parody, instead opting to reinterpret Rodgers' melodic songs of despair as precursors of the Bakersfield Sound. As he'd already proved with his 1967 cover of Rodgers' My Rough And Rowdy Ways, and any number of covers of other artists' material, Haggard could invest others' words with his own truth, while The Strangers add a modern roll and weight to these high, keening songs, lending them a soulful timelessness.

2 Merle Haggard And The Strangers Hag

CAPITOL, 1971

You say: "Almost a concept LP; doomed thoughts from the mind of a Vietnam vet hating on hippy America." Calvin S, via mojo4music.com

If Merle's 1969 smash Okie From Muskogee crafted a public image of Haggard as a hawkish redneck Republican, then this 1971 LP worked as something of a re-dress. Blessed with the quintessential Bakersfield Sound partnership of producer Ken Nelson and guitarist James Burton, *Hag* is an LP of doomed apocalyptic predictions (Jesus, Take A Hold) and ruminations from homeless men (Shelly's Winter Love; Sidewalks Of Chicago) soundtracked by weeping fiddle, the lonesome howl of Norm Hamlet's steel guitar and Burton's exquisite guitar that repeatedly comments on *Hag*'s declarations, grievances and brief joys.

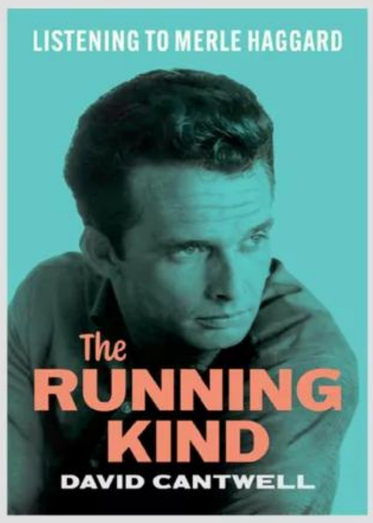
Merle Haggard Serving 190 Proof

MCA, 1979

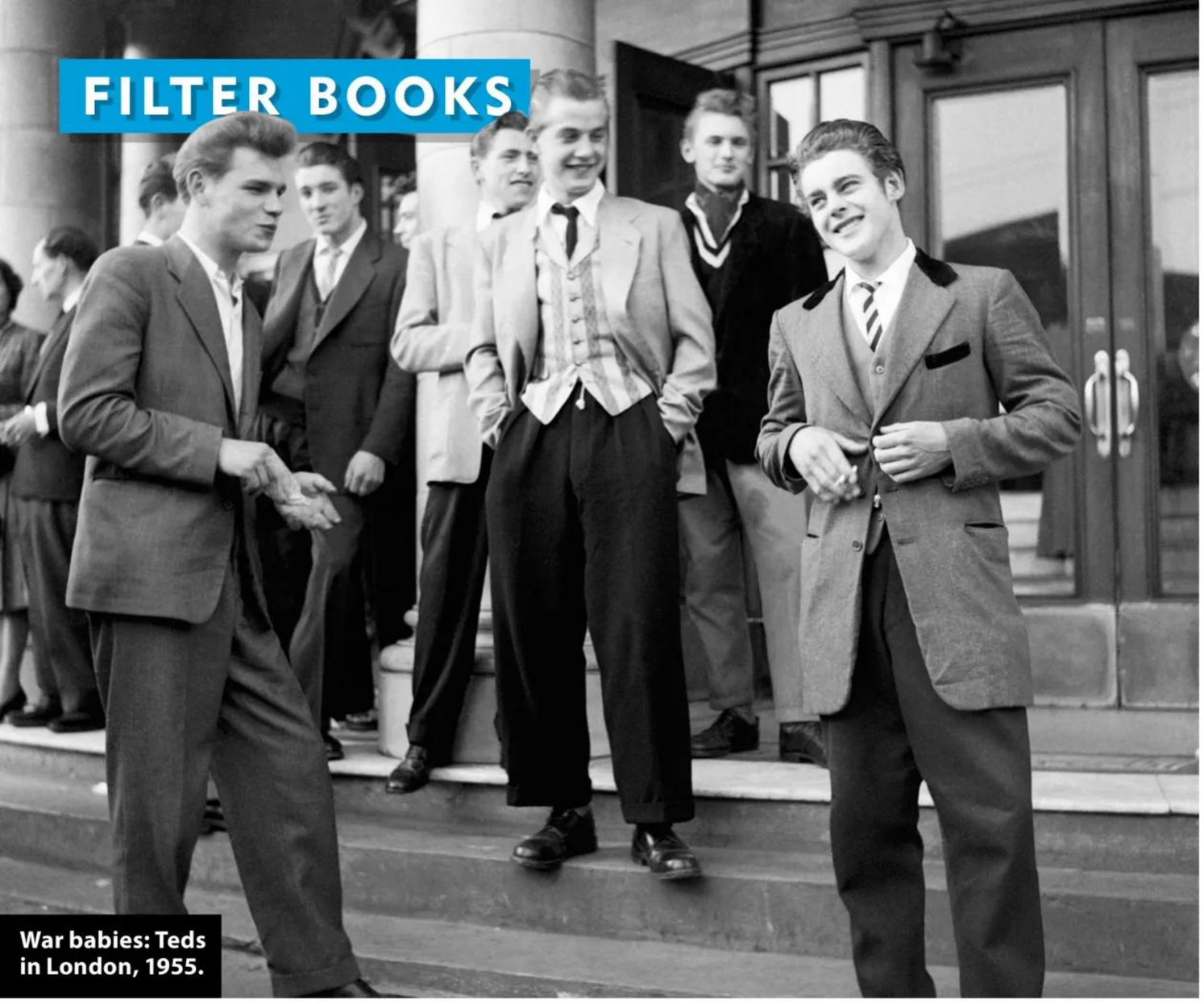
You say: "By far his most personal album. Merle tackles the realities around alcoholism, going for an honest, stripped-down sound." Jocelyn Romo @theeroamer, via X

Merle Haggard in 1979 was an artist adrift. Stuck in Nashville in an unhappy marriage, depressed and contemplating retirement, the 42-year-old singer consolidated his lonesomeness into an album of warm and weary ruin. Produced by Sinatra Reprise stalwart Jimmy Bowen and Haggard's right-hand man Fuzzy Owen, *Serving 190 Proof* is a collection of bleak, intimate confessionals, semi-autobiographical tales of career fatigue (Footlights), mental crack-up (Heaven Was A Drink of Wine), and visions of the existential abyss. However, the triumph of the LP is how it takes Haggard's poetic despair and wraps it in the cosy, two-drinks-in barroom warmth of Mark Yeary's electric piano, Don Markham's lazy horns and Roy Nichols' jazzy, Walter Becker-esque guitar to bring you the sedate sound of a man gently coming apart at the seams.

NOW DIG THIS



This How To Buy concentrated on solo studio LPs but Haggard was a peerless singles artist, and 4-CD career-spanning comp *Down Every Road* (Capitol, 1996) is essential. Of the great LPs that didn't make the cut, the best are *Mama Tried* (Capitol, 1968) and the similarly titled, stripped-back gospel collection, *Songs For The Mama That Tried* (MCA, 1981). His duet LPs with George Jones (*A Taste Of Yesterday's Wine*, 1982) and Leona Williams (*Heart To Heart*, 1983) are also worthy of your time. Book-wise, the key text here is David Cantwell's The Running Kind: Listening To Merle Haggard (University Of Texas Press, 2022). It's one of the greatest music books ever written and will be my constant companion as I journey deeper into Merle's world. This is just the beginning.



War babies: Teds in London, 1955.

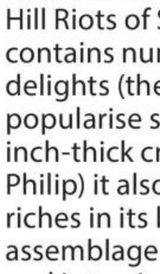
Teddy Boys

★★★★

Max Décharné

PROFILE. £25

The post-war youth revolution dissected in microcosm.



Max Décharné is both historian and lexicographer. Ever since his first non-fiction work, hipster slang dictionary Straight From The Fridge, Dad, the former Gallon Drunk drummer and frontman of garage punk balladeers, The Flaming Stars, has immersed himself in the argot of the late 20th century. His exemplary 2005 history of the King's Road (expanded in 2023) was as much about the language and folklore of the former royal thoroughfare as it was about its artistic, musical and sartorial developments. So while this rise-and-fall chronicle of the New Edwardians, from the early-'50s cosh boys to the Notting Hill Riots of September 1958, contains numerous historical delights (the first person to popularise suede shoes with inch-thick crêpe soles? Prince Philip) it also offers repeated riches in its lovingly curated assemblage of news articles and interviews that reveal how this working-class cultural revolution was reinterpreted, co-opted and demonised by the politicians, media and cultural language of the time.

Andrew Male

Euphoric Recall

★★★

Peter Jesperson

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESS. £24

Midwest industry veteran's tales of life with R.E.M. and The Replacements.

Getty

This memoir from veteran Minneapolis scenester Jesperson really comes alive once he crosses paths with The Replacements, his amiable chronicle of early musical awakenings and days running local record shop Oar Folkjokeopus thoroughly upended by the self-sabotaging antics of the quartet. Co-founder of Twin/Tone Records, Jesperson signs the group, serves as tour manager and manager, and becomes frontman Paul Westerberg's confidant, offering an intimate perspective on Westerberg's development as a songwriter. But, as with everything Replacements-related, it turns sour: a brief gig tour-managing R.E.M. stirs resentment among the 'Mats, while their drunken buffoonery rapidly deteriorates into more troubling, destructive behaviour. The rest – covering Jesperson's own battles with addiction, his post-'Mats career – is less compelling, but the meat of Jesperson's tome richly captures the proprietary blend of doomed promise and inevitable heartbreak that was visited upon all who sailed with The Replacements.

Stevie Chick

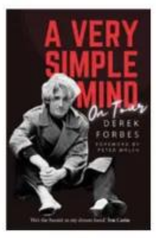
A Very Simple Mind On Tour

★★★

Derek Forbes

McNIDDER & GRACE. £22

Tour diary memories of the bassist who was named "a very Simple Mind" by David Bowie.



Between 1978 and 1985, Derek Forbes was the low-end driving force behind Simple Minds' evolution from post-punkers to arena-fillers. He clearly kept detailed notes, particularly in the opening chapter, titled The Best Year Ever…, where Forbes's 1984 is documented gig-by-gig, eventually leading to his surprise sacking the following year, due to him "giving too much attention to my girlfriend, and not nearly enough to the band". There's little room for self-pity, though, and despite the odd dig at Jim Kerr here and there, this is in the main a rollicking account of how the original band created such indefinable music and then took it out on the road. If Forbes lacks the natural narrative flow of, say, the Bunnymen's Will Sergeant in his recent memoirs, then there are still entertaining and illuminating stories aplenty – whether it be singing back-up vocals in the studio with Bowie, or writing the indelible bass riff for Waterfront.

Tom Doyle

Curepedia: An A-Z Of The Cure

★★★★

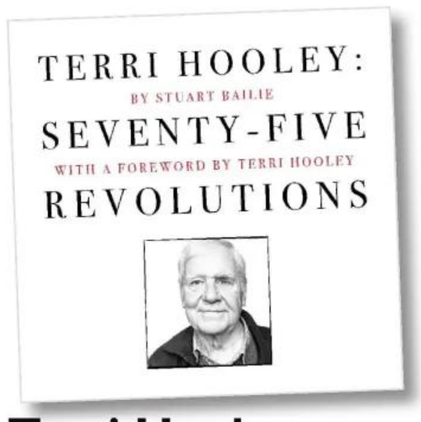
Simon Price

WHITE RABBIT. £35

Act of Faith: essential compendium of Cure-lore.

Handsomely bound in lipstick-red and eyeliner-black, Curepedia is the weighty embodiment of author Simon Price's assertion that "The Cure are a band whose *oeuvre* invites over-thinking." Arranged alphabetically in the style of Simon Goddard's Mozipedia, Price's book is part reference tome, part critical study, as essential for the completist who wants a month-by-month itinerary of Robert Smith's "craziest year" (1983) as it is for those fans who yearn for crisp analysis of Smith's drowning metaphors or a breakdown of forests in literary history (the terrors of The Teddy Bear's Picnic included). As well as writing entries for such concrete entities as David Bowie, *Wild Mood Swings*, Crawley or Smith's wife Mary, Price also catalogues the less tangible elements of The Cure's curious ecosystem, exploring hair, urination, bullying, cuteness and the much-anticipated fourteenth album. Like a Brazilian stadium during the band's 1987 tour, it contains multitudes.

Victoria Segal



Terri Hooley: Seventy-Five Revolutions

★★★★

Stuart Bailie

DIG WITH IT. £18.99

Warm-hearted tribute to the Belfast-based rapscallion who enabled Teenage Kicks.

These days, he's a 75-year-old who spends three days a week undergoing kidney dialysis, but Terri Hooley was once a force of nature. His label, Good Vibrations, not only released Teenage Kicks, but was a beacon of mischievous, punk colour during the darkest days of The Troubles in Northern Ireland. A hard-partying peace'n'love hippy, Hooley himself is a one-eyed survivor of strokes, heart attacks and punishment beatings, who by his own disingenuous account, is "a fake, a fraud… as thick as a brick", and according to his friend, David Hyndman, was "bloody awful to work with". Yet, as Bill Clinton noted in a message read out at a fund-raiser, "I commend Terri Hooley for giving young people something positive to say 'yes' to". And the tales here couldn't be taller, be it chiding Bob Dylan for not withholding taxes and being told to "fuck off", or being beaten up by John Lennon. Heart-warming and bonkers.

John Aizlewood

Where We Come From: Rap, Home And Hope In Modern Britain

★★★★

Aniefiok Ekpoudom

FABER. £20

Assured and humane study of overlapping generations of MC endeavour.

The big question addressed by Neef Ekpoudom's pioneering first long-form publication is how the homegrown cottage industry of UK hip-hop – "a hobby that blossomed in the souls of the inner cities, but never really paid" – evolved into the Glastonbury bill-topping multi-platinum concern that is UK rap via grime's urgent catalysis. Or to put it in an even smaller nutshell, how Skinnyman begat Stormzy with a lot of help from Skepta. It's about time Stimpy & Scruface's Nutty Violins was placed in its broader historical context and Ekpoudom's knack for a lyrical flourish – the DTI's vindictive pursuit of endlessly resourceful Handsworth community radio pioneer Cecil Morris becomes "an eternal loop of cat and mouse playing on the concrete beanstalks of Birmingham" – is backed up by a considerable body of leg-work. There is no year zero here, but rather an ongoing – and ultimately successful – struggle "to forge diamonds from scraps".

Ben Thompson

Phew, Eh Readers?: The Life And Writing Of Tom Hibbert

★★★★

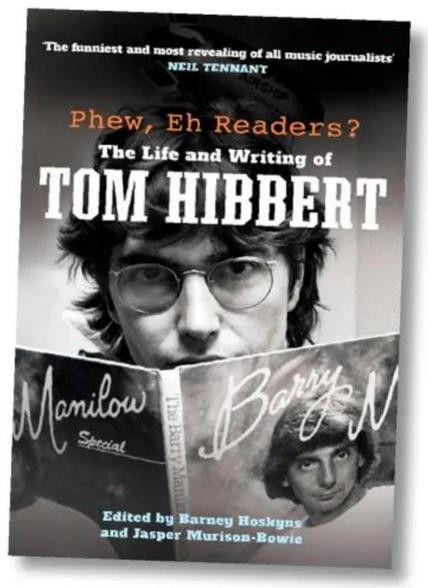
Edited by Barney Hoskyns and Jasper Murison-Bowie

NINE EIGHT. £22

Roky, Ringo, Roger Waters… meet Tom Hibbert.

Once upon a time, journalists could be rock stars too. California's rebel rock casualty Lester Bangs waxed gonzo and his cult lives on. Likewise tragically self-destructing, Tom Hibbert was his terribly British counterpart, gleefully modulating through the keys of Wodehouse and Waugh (father and son), Molesworth (hem hem) and The Beano in hilarious pursuit of pop's beautiful, damned and deranged, qualities seldom found in the stars he debagged in Smash Hits (of Jon Bon Jovi: "The sunshine wafts in through the window, trickling through his hair, and it becomes disgustingly evident that this man has not been beaten with the ugliness stick. He is simply ravissant, my dears…"), Q (several classic Who the hell…? inquisitions centrepiece this anthology) and MOJO. Though his life ended desperately in 2011, in his heyday that Withnail-esque wit delighted readers, colleagues and close circle alike, many of whom, like Neil Tennant, shrewdly but affectionately reflect here on a great lost legend.

Mat Snow



Glory days: Simple Minds, 1981 (from left) Charlie Burchill, Derek Forbes, Jim Kerr, Mick MacNeil, Brian McGee.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- In the early '80s, although pulling large audiences in the UK and Europe, Simple Minds were still struggling in the US. Jim Kerr recalls playing a club to 30 people. Afterwards, the promoter says the previous night's band had just 25. "What band?" "U2".
- *New Gold Dream* producer Peter Walsh still has the wine bill for a 30-day recording session: 61 bottles of Liebfraumilch, 59 Beaujolais, 12 Claret, six Medoc, three Muscadet and seven house red.
- Molly Ringwald claims credit for Don't You (Forget About Me) propelling Simple Minds to global fame, after she persuaded film director John Hughes to put her favourite band on the soundtrack to The Breakfast Club.
- After moving to Taormina in Sicily, Kerr sponsored the local amateur football club. "Bit controversial," he says. "They play in blue. When I'm up in Glasgow, the team in blue aren't necessarily my team. So we changed the kit to green and white hoops, and called them 'Taormina Celtic'."

Miracle workers

The big ups, downs and returns of Scotland's greatest band. By Keith Cameron.

Simple Minds: Everything Is Possible

★★★★

Dir: Joss Crowley

BMG/PARAMOUNT +. ST

IN EARLY 1978, shortly after their debut gig, Simple Minds were interviewed by Glasgow local newspaper reporter Billy Sloan. Asked about the band's goals, Jim Kerr issued a list of "not small demands": they wanted to "break nationally… put on a good rock show… not rely on good reviews for our success". What struck Sloan most was the 18-year-old's confident parting shot. "We'll do it," Kerr said, "because we're convinced we're too good to be ignored."

Sure enough, four years after promising Billy Sloan a miracle, Kerr was singing it on Top Of The Pops. Three years further on, his band were Number 1 in America, playing to 90,000 at Live Aid, and Kerr was Mr Chrissie Hynde. Simple Minds define working-class heroism, a journey that began in the housing schemes of Glasgow's Southside, and Joss Crowley's documentary does a fine job in mapping its trajectory with a blend of archive footage and contemporary interviews, emphasising the craft and graft required to emerge from places whose inhabitants were typically written off as "industrial cannon fodder", as near-neighbour Bobby Gillespie observes.

An abundance of characterful detail centres on the partnership of Kerr and guitarist Charlie Burchill, whose lives remain entwined ever since first meeting as eight-year-olds in a sandpit amid the towers and maisonettes of as-yet unfinished Toryglen. The resonance of this story partly derives from their enduring bond, but also a relentless drive to expand their world, assimilating the musical knowledge that yielded the radical art-pop albums upon which Simple Minds' eventual breakthrough was built. "You wanted to learn your trade, so that when success came you were ready," Kerr says, contemplating the Clyde's former shipyards that inspired 1983's hit Waterfront, to which Burchill adds, almost wistfully: "We had a great band at this point".

That recognition of group alchemy highlights the notable absence from the film of original members Derek Forbes, Mick MacNeil and Brian McGee. By way of recompense, there are pungent contributions from former manager Bruce Findlay, producer Jimmy Iovine ("I'll say it's not good enough 'til we're both dead"), and Jerry Dammers, who pointedly states that 1988's Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute at Wembley Stadium would never have happened without Jim Kerr's commitment. A veil is drawn over the band's barren '90s and '00s; Kerr confesses to "depression", and "a sense of failing". Yet as he himself notes, what makes Simple Minds unusual isn't the ascent to the summit or the slide back down, but the subsequent successful climb back up the mountain: "You find out a lot about yourself when you're in the back of a van driving to a club that isn't sold out, and you drive past the stadium that you did sell out…"

For whatever reason, Simple Minds bucked the conventional narrative of getting the old gang back together, and today's conspicuously more gender-balanced "theatrical ensemble" are filling arenas once more. On one level, this film is simply a very handsome, supremely watchable promo for 2024's world tour. But having already proven everything to be possible, you would not bet against Simple Minds writing another great ending to their story.

"Jim Kerr confesses to 'depression' and 'a sense of failing'."

Virginia Turbett/Getty Images

Killing Joke's Kevin 'Geordie' Walker with his "orchestra in a fucking box", 1988.

THE LEGACY

The Album: Killing Joke *Killing Joke* (Polydor/EG, 1980)

The Sound: KJ's debut drew up a terrifying new post-punk blueprint, which encapsulated new-decade fears of nuclear holocaust. Geordie's guitar reached credibly cataclysmic new extremes, whether ultra-heavy ostinato (on Wardance's "music to march to"), or razor-edged picking (S.O.36). As per its opening anthem, this album alone serves as a mighty elegy.

Requiem

Kevin 'Geordie' Walker, Killing Joke's guitarist par excellence, left us on November 26, 2023.

FOR ALL the crazed conviction of singer Jaz Coleman's apocalyptic visions in Killing Joke's music, it could so easily have come across as the ramblings of a madman, if it weren't for their remarkable mirroring in 'Geordie' Walker's persuasive, crunching guitar playing.

Every inch the stony-faced assassin, Walker was one of the three six-string architects – alongside PiL's Keith Levene and Magazine/Siouxsie & The Banshees' John McGeoch – who built upon punk's reductive fundaments and channelled its initial dark energies in new, unimagined directions. One second brutal riffing, the next scything arpeggiation, Geordie's epic style minted on KJ's 1980 debut had within a decade been absorbed into both world-beating thrash-metal and industrial-rock, with Metallica and Nine Inch Nails among those acknowledging Geordie's artistry. "He was a huge influence on me," noted Metallica's Kirk Hammett on Walker's passing in Prague, aged just 64.

Peter Anderson

> "He was a huge influence on me."
> **KIRK HAMMETT**

Born in Chester-Le-Street, County Durham, on December 18, 1958, Kevin Walker acquired his lifelong nickname after his family relocated to Bletchley in Buckinghamshire. His grandmother played the piano completely by ear, he told this writer in 2015, while his parents were competitive ballroom dancers who played Radio 1 constantly from its launch in 1967.

Gifted a Les Paul by his mother, who remembered seeing Hendrix playing one in '67, Geordie duly learnt to play The Move's Blackberry Way by ear, like his grandma. He shuttled down to London to see Dr. Feelgood at the Roundhouse in '75, was particularly smitten by the Sex Pistols' poppiest moment, Pretty Vacant, and after moving to London to study architecture, answered an ad in Melody Maker placed by Coleman and drummer 'Big' Paul Ferguson.

He moved into the pair's flat in Battersea amid dabblings in the occult: one botched ritual saw them burn the house down. The auspices were far stronger for the quartet they formed with Martin Glover, AKA Youth, as support from John Lydon and John Peel led to 1980's volcanic debut being released by Polydor via Brian Eno's EG, its haunting end-times extremity outflanking first-wave punk for intensity and political ire.

KJ's sound was further beefed on 1981's feral *What's This For...!*, but the band only properly raided the charts with Love Like Blood from 1985's gothy *Night Time*. Throughout, and right up to the reactivated original quartet's three records circa 2009-15, the writing team of classically trained Coleman and pop-savvy Walker routinely sculpted material to die for. Admirers included Nirvana, who gee'd themselves up pre-show with KJ tapes and famously lifted the riff for Come As You Are from '84's Eighties, while Dave Grohl stood in on drums for '03's *Killing Joke*.

Walker lovingly referred to the six-string electric as "an orchestra in a fucking box – it plays itself", and on-stage, he'd coolly caress his golden instrument as if he couldn't possibly be the generator of the bone-breaking cacophony that had engulfed the room. He seemed in every sense the hardiest perennial, and while he may have passed on to some other spiritual realm, his glorious and unstoppable sound will reverberate for ever.

Andrew Perry

Jean Knight

Mr Big Stuff singer

BORN 1943

IN 1971 New Orleans singer Jean Knight hit US R&B Number 1 and pop Number 2 with Mr Big Stuff. A furious face-off with patriarchy, with blasting brass and a greasy groove, it took her birth city's trademark R&B and made it funky.

Issued by Stax – who initially turned it down – the single sold over two million copies in its first year, earned Knight a Grammy nomination for best female performance, and later returned to the charts sampled in hits by Dr Dre, Beastie Boys, TLC and many more.

Born Jean Audrey Caliste, her parents Florence and Louis had sung as a duo in the city's clubs. On leaving school, Knight herself sang the same circuit. Then, after recording a demo of Jackie Wilson's Doggin' Around, she came to the attention of producer Huey Meaux, who signed her to his Jetstar/Tribe labels and released singles including 1965's outstanding teen ballad Anyone Can Love Him. When none charted, she became a baker, but gave it up when Mr Big Stuff hit. An album of the same name followed, reaching the US soul Top 10 but her contract with Stax was severed after an alleged falling out between the label and producer Wardell Quezergue.

She retrained as a nurse the following decade, also securing minor US hit singles with 1981's You Got The Papers (But I Got The Man) and 1985's My Toot Toot. She also became a favourite at the New Orleans Jazz And Heritage Festival, with over 30 appearances. 1999 saw the release of *Queen*, her fifth and final album, while in 2007 she was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame. "I'll always be known for Mr Big Stuff," she said, "but I don't mind. It's brought in the royalty cheques. If I didn't love singing so much I could just sit at home waiting for the mail man."

Lois Wilson

Big-hitter: New Orleans soul singer Jean Knight.

Getty (2), Alamy (2)

Brian Godding

Blossom Toes guitarist, and more

BORN 1945

BROUGHT UP in London, Monmouthshire-born Brian Godding joined rockers The Gravediggers as a teen and later played R&B with The Ingoes, who became battle-hardened in Hamburg and Paris, and backed Sonny Boy Williamson in the UK. Later, directed by manager Giorgio Gomelsky, the group morphed into Blossom Toes, with Godding and Jim Cregan as dual lead guitarists. After two albums (1967's *We Are Ever So Clean* and 1969's *If Only For A Moment*) the band split following a car crash, partially regrouping for BB Blunder's *Worker's Playtime* (1971). Married to former collaborator Julie Driscoll's sister Angie, and with a more improvisatory approach in place, Godding also played with Centipede, Mike Westbrook, Magma, Kevin Coyne, Mirage, Eric Burdon, Meic Stephens, Annette Peacock, Full Monte and others. His jazz-rock solo LP *Slaughter On Shaftesbury Avenue* was released in 1988, and more recently he self-released numerous archive recordings. "Enjoy music, enjoy life," he advised, "and you've more or less got it made."

Ian Harrison

Chairman of the 'board: highly versatile keys man Amp Fiddler.

Amp Fiddler

Detroit funk ambassador

BORN 1958

A HIGHLY versatile keyboardist, Joseph 'Amp' Fiddler studied under jazz pianist Harold McKinney at Oakland University, turning pro with local R&B stars Enchantment in the early 1980s. He replaced Bernie Worrell in Parliament-Funkadelic in 1984 and stayed over a decade, also issuing 1990's *With Respect* (as Mr Fiddler), an out-on-a-limb blend of speakeasy jazz, bebop and funk. Fiddler founded the Camp Amp school to tutor young musicians, notably teaching hip-hop producer J Dilla to work an Akai MPC60 workstation, while his warm Fender Rhodes grooves and curvy synthesizer arpeggios lit up sessions for Prince, Seal, Primal Scream and Maxwell's 1996 debut *Urban Hang Suite*. So often the bridesmaid, the loose-limbed slithery funk of 2004's *Waltz Of A Ghetto Fly* showed he was a worthy frontman with a soulful croon, a fact underlined by recent collaborative outings with Will Sessions. He died from cancer.

Andy Cowan

"Amp Fiddler's warm grooves and curvy synth arpeggios lit up sessions for Prince, Seal and Primal Scream."

Les Maguire

Pacemakers keys/singer

BORN 1941

BORN IN Wallasey, Les Maguire was tenor saxophonist for rock'n'rollers The Undertakers and the Vegas Five, but was hired to replace original Gerry And The Pacemakers pianist Arthur MacMahon in 1961 because, unlike the other members of the Merseybeat band, he could read music. "It's about being in the right place at the right time," he noted. This he was: the group were the first British band to hit UK Number 1 with their first three singles, in 1963, and also enjoyed Top 20 success in the US. But after the highs, the cheery Pacemakers were the wrong band for changing times, and Maguire left in 1966. Later pursuits included blues rockers Hog Owl, Pacemakers reunions, running a garage and joining the Navy, including active service in the Falklands. In 2016, he auctioned a 1962 10-inch acetate of The Beatles' Till There Was You/ Hello Little Girl which had been given to him by manager Brian Epstein, which had sat undisturbed in his loft for 50 years.

Martin Aston

Rebel rouser: Blossoms star Fanita James.

Fanita James

Blossoms singer

BORN 1938

UNDERSUNG GODMOTHERS of pop, The Blossoms pioneered the church-schooled female vocal group vital in so much music, whether singing behind the stars or spotlit front-stage. Co-founded as The Dreamers in 1954 by Fanita Barrett (later James) at high school in LA, they became in-demand backing singers, but their own singles found little success until 1962's Number 1 smash, He's A Rebel – except producer/svengali Phil Spector credited the rush-recorded and released 45 to absent-on-tour label stars, The Crystals, paying The Blossoms triple-scale and rebranding lead Blossom Darlene Wright as Darlene Love. Though household fame eluded the group, The Blossoms supplied stellar sparkle to legendary live and studio performances by The Ronettes, Righteous Brothers, Marvin, Elvis, Sinatra, Ike & Tina Turner, Betty Everett, Tom Jones, Johnny Rivers, even Doris Day, their sound loved by millions who've never heard of them.

Mat Snow

Tony Oxley

Improvising drummer

BORN 1938

NO ONE DID more than this Kali-armed South Yorkshire powerhouse to expand the parameters of home-grown percussive endeavour. From his enigmatically named mid-'60s improvising unit Joseph Holbrooke – free music forebears of mythic post-punk Scousers The Crucial Three, with Sheffield near neighbours Derek Bailey and Gavin Bryars on guitar and bass – to keeping William Parker and Cecil Taylor on their rhythmic toes in the often-overwhelming Feel Trio decades later, Oxley did much of his best work in triangles. But all manner of other shapes were available to the percussionist and composer who translated a picaresque apprenticeship (in the Black Watch regimental orchestra, with a dance band on the Queen Mary, as the house drummer at Ronnie Scott's) into a mature career which lost no momentum when his four-year reign as Melody Maker's drummer of the year ended in 1972, ultimately turning pots and pans into the punctuation of an entirely new kind of sentence.

Ben Thompson

THEY ALSO SERVED

VOCALIST AND ARTIST **JOHN HYATT** (below, b.c.1961) was at the forefront of the post-punk Leeds scene in the late '70s and early '80s. Alongside Mekon Jon Langford and Phillip John Brennan, plus trusty drum machine, Hyatt formed **The Three Johns** in 1981. There followed a series of radical, irreverent records, notably 1984 debut *Atom Drum Bop*, and 1985's classic Death Of The European. After the group split in 1990, Hyatt concentrated on an academic career, but rejoined his bandmates for shows in 2012 and 2017.

DETROIT SINGER-SONGWRITER **NIDRA BEARD** (b.1952) sang lead with LA soul act **Dynasty**, co-writing 1979's UK Top 20 hit I Don't Want To Be A Freak (But I Can't Help Myself). The group found US success with 1980's I've Just Begun To Love You, while two years later Beard also co-wrote **Shalamar**'s Top 5 UK smash A Night To Remember. In 2020, she rejoined the reactivated Dynasty.

SOCAL SINGER and guitarist **JEFFREY FOSKETT** (b.1956) played in bands including **Cherry** and **The Pranks** before befriending Brian Wilson in 1976. In 1979 his band **Reverie** supported Mike Love's Endless Summer Beach Band, after which he joined **The Beach Boys**' live group from 1981 to 1990. Later that decade Foskett joined Brian's group as musical director, and in 2012 took part in the Beach Boys' anniversary tour. He also recorded solo.

ORIGINAL AC/DC DRUMMER **COLIN BURGESS** (b.1946) was playing in Sydney bands with his brother Denny when he was asked to join **The Masters Apprentices**. In 1973, Burgess joined the original line-up of **AC/DC**. In 1974 he was accused of being drunk on-stage and was fired: Burgess appears uncredited on AC/DC's 1974 7-inch Can I Sit Next To You, Girl.

ANGLO-JAMAICAN DUB POET **BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH** (below, b.1958) was well-known for his verse, writing and acting as well as his anti-racism and social activism. He also recorded numerous solo LPs – 1982's debut *Rasta* featured **The Wailers** and, he said, topped the charts in Yugoslavia – and worked with **Sinéad O'Connor**, **Mad Professor**, **Howard Jones** and **Rodney P**.

SONGWRITER **RICHARD KERR** (b.1944) debuted with 1966 solo single Hard Lovin', but soon moved into writing for others, with **Don Partridge**'s 1968 Number 3 hit Blue Eyes a successful co-write. Brandy, his 1971 co-composition for **Scott English**, was turned into the global hit Mandy by **Barry Manilow** in 1974; with Will Jennings, Kerr wrote further hits for Manilow, **Dionne Warwick** and **Helen Reddy**. From 1973, he also recorded six solo LPs.

PUB ROCK MOVER **JOHN EICHLER** (b.1944) was part of the Famepushers management team behind **Brinsley Schwarz**'s infamous launch debacle at the Fillmore East in 1970. He also managed **Help Yourself**. He was later instrumental in the pub rock boom when he took over Islington's Hope & Anchor in 1976, providing similar assistance to punk soon after.

COMIC/SINGER **TOM SMOTHERS** (b.1937) was half of the **Smothers Brothers** alongside younger sibling Dick, who began as satirical folk singers before finding US TV fame as a comedy duo in 1965. Embraced by the counter-culture for their hip references and musical guests, their show was abruptly cancelled in 1969. Tom, who introduced acts at Monterey Pop in '67 and was present for John Lennon and Yoko Ono's Montreal bed-in, later appeared in films, and toured with his brother again in 2023.

FRENCH HORN PLAYER and double bassist **WILLIE RUFF** (b.1931) played with jazzers including **Miles Davis**, **Lionel Hampton**, **Oscar Peterson**, **Dizzy Gillespie** and **Gil Evans**. His CV also included *Songs Of Leonard Cohen* and sessions for Joni Mitchell's *Blue*. From 1971 he was also a Professor at Yale, and played in a duo with his pianist army buddy **Dwike Mitchell** from 1955 to 2011.

INDIE ROCKER/MANAGER **EDDIE CONNELLY** (b.1964) played bass with East Kilbride's **Meat Whiplash**, who released a sole single Don't Slip Up on Creation in 1985 and provoked the audience when supporting The Jesus And Mary Chain at their infamous riot gig at North London Poly that year. Connelly also ran Edinburgh's Narodnik label, formed indie pop contenders **The Motorcycle Boy**, and managed Creation Records triers **Adorable**.

GRATEFUL DEAD producer/engineer/archivist **JOHN CUTLER** (b.1950) began working for the Herculean jam band in earnest after preparing the ground for their trip to Egypt in 1978. A sound engineer for the **Jerry Garcia Band** and the Dead, he also co-produced the group's final LPs (including 1987's *In The Dark* and 1989's *Built To Last*) and worked on reissues.

DIXIE CHICKS original member **LAURA LYNCH** (below, b.1958) co-founded the Dallas group in 1989 and appeared on three country and bluegrass LPs. The group's bassist, and lead singer from 1993, in 1997 she was replaced by Natalie Maines, after which the group pursued more commercial imperatives. She died in a car crash in El Paso.

BRAZILIAN SINGER/COMPOSER **CARLOS LYRA** (b.1933) released his debut album *Bossa Nova* in 1959; during the same year his songs appeared on **João Gilberto**'s debut *Chega De Saudade*. His much-covered canon includes songs such as Você E Eu and Minha Namorada, while in 1962 he appeared at the Carnegie Hall event when America was exposed to the new musical trend from Brazil. In December 2023, Lyra's album *Afeto* was released, wherein admirers including Gilberto Gil and Joyce Moreno celebrated his ninetieth year.

Jenny Bulley, John Mulvey and Ian Harrison

Ian Tilton, Getty (4)

Les McCann

Soul jazz pioneer

BORN 1935

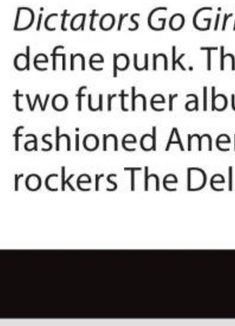
"I CALLED my wife, and cried down the phone: The motherfuckers fucked up my record!" So said Kentucky-born singer/pianist McCann in 2002, recalling his initial reaction to an unrehearsed collaboration with saxophonist Eddie Harris at the 1969 Montreux Jazz Festival. To McCann's amazement, the resulting album, *Swiss Movement*, dented the US Top 30 while spawning a hit single, Compared To What, a countercultural anthem later recorded by Roberta Flack, whom McCann discovered. Nine years earlier, McCann's career began at Pacific Jazz when his piano trio's gospel-steeped cadences thrust him into the vanguard of the soul jazz movement, which preceded his move to electric funk in the '70s. In 1995, a stroke derailed his career, but he returned to the studio in 2002 for the album *Pump It Up*. His final release was 2018's Yuletide album *A Time Les Christmas*. Miles Davis once called him, "the funkiest cat I know."

Charles Waring

Scott 'Top Ten' Kempner

Punk forefather

BORN 1954



IN MAY 1974, New York's Village Voice said The Dictators "are the first true punk-rockers of the Seventies." Bronx-born guitarist Scott 'Top Ten' Kempner, whose Stooges-come-surf attack drove their music, co-founded the band in 1972 and was their main songwriter. The first post-Dolls New York outfit with a label contract, their lairiness, leeriness and avowed uncouthness – heard on 1975 debut album *The Dictators Go Girl Crazy!* – helped define punk. They imploded after two further albums and Kempner fashioned Americana-inclined rockers The Del-Lords in 1982, and regularly played with Dion DiMucci. The last Dic's reunion was curbed when Kempner left in 2022 due to a dementia diagnosis. In 2008, he told Punk Globe "I play rock'n'roll. My standbys are Chuck Berry, The Who's *Live At Leeds*, Springsteen, Dylan '66, Robert Johnson, NRBQ, *Nuggets* – things that are physical, emotional and spiritual."

Kieron Tyler

Les McCann: "the funkiest cat" according to Miles Davis.

THEY ALSO SERVED

SINGER-SONGWRITER **ESSRA MOHAWK** (below, b.Sandra Elayne Hurvitz, 1948) moved to New York from Philadelphia in her teens. After meeting Shadow Morton and writing for the Shangri-La's, **Frank Zappa** briefly recruited her to **The Mothers Of Invention**: she released her debut LP as **Sandy Hurvitz** through his Bizarre label in 1968. From '69 until 2019 she recorded as **Essra Mohawk**. She also wrote songs for **Cyndi Lauper** and **Tina Turner** and worked with **Jerry Garcia**, **Kool & The Gang** and **Biff Rose**.

DRUMMER **RUSSELL HUNTER** (b.1946) was in the same grammar school class as Robert Fripp and Gordon Haskell. He left Bournemouth covers band **The Mob** after an unreleased session with **Joe Meek** and hit swinging London, joining Ladbroke Grove freak flag fliers **The Deviants** with **Mick Farren** in 1967. After that group's collapse, Hunter joined the Hawkwind-affiliated, unafraid-to-be-nude **Pink Fairies** with **Twink** as second drummer in 1969, though a commercial breakthrough was not to be. Hunter returned for reunions in the '80s and 2014; he later retired to Eastbourne.

PRODUCER AND ENGINEER **NORMAN DAYRON** (b.c.1940) was a friend and collaborator of guitarist **Mike Bloomfield**. After they met in Chicago in the early '60s, Dayton is credited with introducing Bloomfield to harmonica player Paul Butterfield: he recorded numerous sessions with Bloomfield, and they remained close friends until the latter's death in 1981. An in-house engineer and producer at Chess, the Bronx-born Dayron also recorded blues albums by **Howlin' Wolf**, **Muddy Waters**, **Otis Spann** and many more.

PAISLEY ARTIST **JOHN BYRNE** (below, b.1940) was a celebrated playwright and screenwriter. He was also known for his striking album cover art, including *HMS Donovan*, *Stealers Wheel* and **Gerry Rafferty**'s *City To City*. His sleeve for 1980's *The Beatles Ballads* was originally considered for *The White Album*. He co-wrote songs with his pal Rafferty, and penned 1987 BBC rock'n'roll drama Tutti Frutti, which starred Robbie Coltrane.

US RADIO DJ **JIM LADD** (b.1948) began broadcasting in Long Island before moving to Los Angeles in the '70s, where he took a non-playlist, 'freeform' approach at the KLOS and KMET stations, and presented the syndicated in-depth Innerview series, where he probed stars including **Led Zeppelin**, **Pink Floyd** and **The Clash**, from 1974 until 1986. In 1987 he appeared on **Roger Waters**' album *Radio K.A.O.S.* and later, until November 2023, worked at Sirius XM. He was, it was said, the inspiration for **Tom Petty**'s 2002 song The Last DJ, which blasted homogeneity and philistinism on the radio waves.

GUITARIST **BOB JOHNSON** (b.1944) joined **Steeleye Span** in 1972, his rock and blues influences helping transform the folk group's sound. That year's *Below The Salt* album featured a version of Gaudete, a 16th century Christmas hymn which Johnson had heard in church, and which became a Top 20 hit. He left the group in 1977 to work on the concept album *The King Of Elfland's Daughter*, which also featured **Alexis Korner** and **Christopher Lee**. He rejoined Steeleye Span for 1980's *Sails Of Silver* and later retired in 2002, but contributed guest vocals and two songs to 2013's *Wintersmith*.

DRUMMER **MANNY MARTINEZ** (b.1954) was the original drummer with horror punk pioneers **The Misfits**. After being invited to join the group by Jerry Only in 1977, initially they rehearsed as a two-piece in Martinez's New Jersey basement. Martinez's sole recording credit with The Misfits is on their debut single Cough/Cool and its B-side She; he left the group in late 1977.

GUITARIST **RONNIE CARYL** (b.1953) played in **Hickory/Flaming Youth** with his friend **Phil Collins**, but unlike the latter failed a 1970 audition to join Genesis. He later toured with **Lulu**, **John Otway** and **Maggie Bell**, and joined Collins' solo band in 1996. He also released two solo records, 1994's *Leave A Light On* and 2003's *One Step At A Time*.

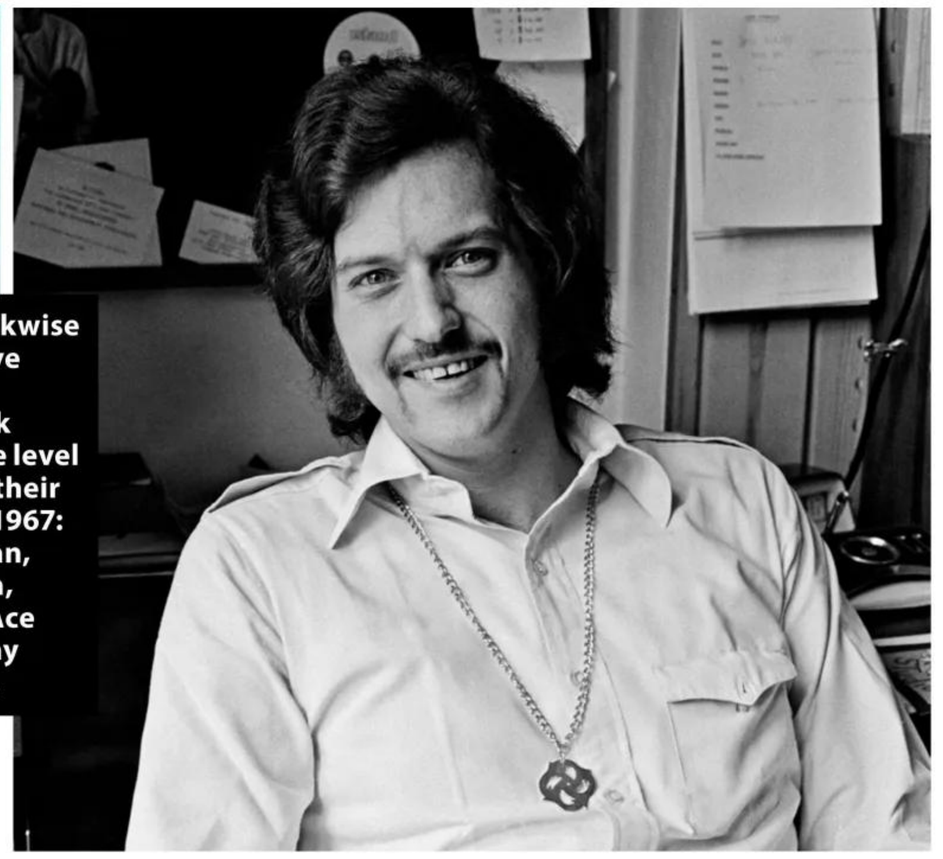
BASSIST, SONGWRITER AND PRODUCER **BRAM INSCORE** (b.1982) collaborated with **Charlotte Gainsbourg**, **Thurston Moore** and, as musical director, **Beck**. He also wrote hit songs for **Rina Sawayama**, **BTS** and **Troye Sivan**. Born in San Francisco, he also released his own music under the name **B.R.A.M.** He took his own life following a long battle with depression.

THE DAKOTAS' guitarist **MIKE MAXFIELD** (b.1944) was part of the Manchester group that was paired with Liverpool singer Billy J Kramer by Brian Epstein. As well as scoring big hits including Number 1s Bad To Me and Little Children with their singer, The Dakotas released singles in their own right, with Maxfield's spiky instrumental The Cruel Sea reaching the UK Number 18 in July 1963. A year later it was covered by instrumental legends The Ventures.

MANAGER **JOHN 'RAMBO' STEVENS** (below, b.1957) loyally handled the affairs of his best friend **John Lydon**, mixing a martial efficiency with a surprising personal warmth. A devotee of Arsenal FC and military history, he also co-produced **PiL** LPs *What The World Needs Now…* (2015) and *End Of World* (2023), and executive-produced Sex Pistols/PiL films There'll Always Be An England (2008) and The Public Image Is Rotten (2017).

Chris Catchpole, Jenny Bulley and Ian Harrison

Getty (5)



The Demon Brum: (clockwise from left) the 1969 Move line-up (from left) Bev Bevan, Carl Wayne, Rick Price, Roy Wood; on the level in London after losing their libel case, October 11, 1967: (from left) Wayne, Bevan, manager Tony Secunda, Trevor Burton, Wood, Ace Kefford; Blackberry Way producer Jimmy Miller.

FEBRUARY 1969

...The Move's Blackberry Way hits Number 1

FEBRUARY 11 It was a fruity time in music all right. The Banana Splits' The Tra La La Song (One Banana, Two Banana) was in the US Hot 100; in Britain, The Beatles were soon to peak at Number 2 with the double A-side Penny Lane/ Strawberry Fields Forever, and a few months later, Peter Sarstedt's Frozen Orange Juice reached the Top 10. At the vanguard of pop's celebration of nature's bounty were Birmingham's The Move. Their sixth single, the sweetly sad Blackberry Way, was at Number 1.

It was the latest in an armful of hits that stand with those of any successful group of the 1960s. Apart from '68's heavy Wild Tiger Woman, all The Move's UK 45s had gone Top 5, with 1967's pop-psych gem Flowers In The Rain the first song played on Radio 1. As well as a tough-looking group able to sing tight four-part harmonies, in songwriter Roy Wood they had a one-man Brummie Lennon & McCartney (one fan was John Lennon, who reputedly likened them to "The Hollies – with balls").

Adding to the fun was manager Tony Secunda, who orchestrated attention-grabbing stunts like the band chopping up TVs on-stage with an axe and carting a fake atom bomb around Manchester. Secunda's wheeze for Flowers In The Rain, though, went awry when he knocked up a promotional postcard featuring Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson in bed with his political secretary. The group lost a libel case and Secunda was relieved of his duties. Enter the feared Don Arden and his Galaxy Entertainments outfit, who booked the band on a joint headline tour with The Jimi Hendrix Experience in November '67, with Pink Floyd supporting.

The hits kept coming, as did the group's relative infamy, which pained the low-temperature Wood. "Is our stage act sexy?" mused singer Carl Wayne to Melody Maker when February '68's Fire Brigade was at Number 3. "It's disgusting! …it's vulgar and obscene, and if I was a father I wouldn't let my daughter see it."

Yet Blackberry Way showed a more palatable, commercial side of The Move, who'd by now turned to Peter Walsh's Starlite Artists for career direction. Produced by Jimmy Miller, Wood admitted the influence of the Fabs' Penny Lane, and sang it himself when Wayne declined to. Entering the UK Top 20 on January 15, within three weeks it was Number 1, promoted by TV appearances on Top Of The Pops, Colour Me Pop and West Germany's Beat-Club.

Yet all was not well in the group. The previous May, charismatic, volatile bassist Ace Kefford had dramatically quit after coming gruesomely unstuck after drinking a bottle of liquid LSD in Birmingham. "I was never right after that," he told MOJO's Mark Paytress of his fateful trip. "There were all these little men sitting round me with pointed heads, big noses and fingers touching the floor. I had the horrors all night."

Another departure coincided with The Move's greatest moment of success. Soon after a planned trip to the US was cancelled, on February 8 Melody Maker reported that rhythm guitarist-turned-bassist Trevor Burton had left to form new band Balls. Frustrated by too many cabaret gigs and the band's reluctance to embrace coming trends in

"Is our stage act sexy? It's disgusting!"
CARL WAYNE

Getty (4), Shutterstock (2), Alamy, Courtesy Trojan Records

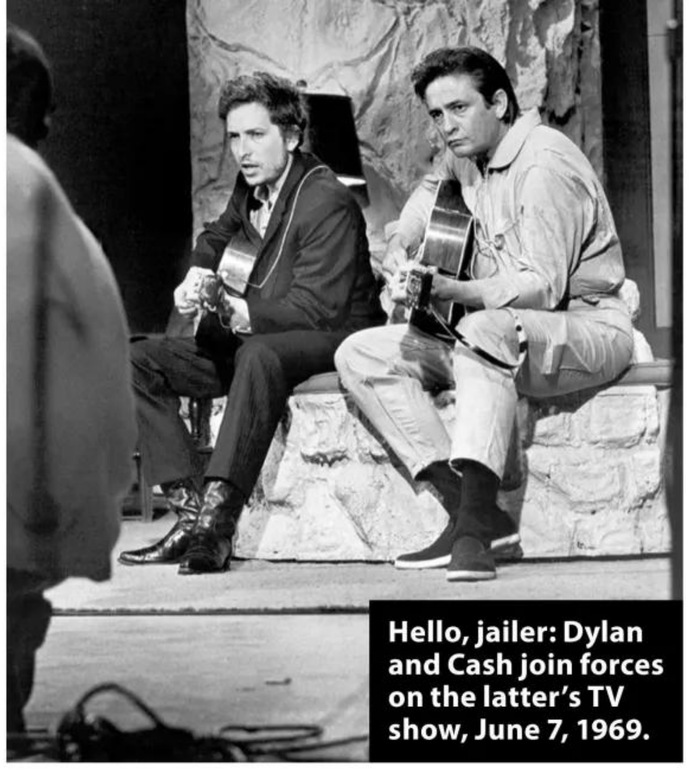
music, Burton had also had an on-stage confrontation with drummer Bev Bevan. "I lost it, and threw my bass at him, kicked over the amps and stomped off," he told MOJO. "As I went off, his hi-hats sort of whistled past my head." He recalled playing his last gig with The Move at Streatham Ice Rink, where they appeared on February 3. "They didn't try to get me to stay," he said, "and I was glad to get out of it."

Word went round that The Move had asked The Shadows' Hank Marvin to join: Marvin told that month's Disc & Music Echo, "I was very flattered of course [but] I have no need financially to join another group." Instead Rick Price of Birmingham's Sight And Sound – who used to parody Wood during gigs with a wig and stick-on moustache – was Burton's replacement.

There was no time to lose: this month the group had shows in Stafford, Cambridge, Bishop's Stortford and Tunstall, with a date at the Royal Albert Hall on February 20 with The Spencer Davis Group and Status Quo. Yet time was running out for The Move's first incarnation. Wayne would leave the band in early 1970 before the release of second LP *Shazam*: new member Jeff Lynne would simultaneously work with Wood realising their Electric Light Orchestra concept, and two albums later, in 1972, The Move were no more.

"It's probably easier to say now that The Move was a stepping stone for me," Wood reflected to The Word in 2011. "I wanted to experiment and be free really… I've never lost the taste for trying something different."

Ian Harrison



Hello, jailer: Dylan and Cash join forces on the latter's TV show, June 7, 1969.

Cash and Dylan in Nashville

FEBRUARY 24 **Johnny Cash records his live album *At San Quentin*, playing to the men incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison. The show features the first performance of his song A Boy Named Sue and is filmed by Granada TV: Cash's famously angry "middle finger" portrait was, said photographer Jim Marshall, a special message to the prison authorities. The setlist also includes Wanted Man by Bob Dylan. Cash and Dylan had recorded together in Nashville earlier in the month on February 17 and 18, singing each other's songs, playing oldies and having fun. During the sessions they recorded Dylan's 1963 song Girl From The North Country as a duet. In April it appears as the opening track on Dylan's ninth album, *Nashville Skyline*.**

Leap year: Blind Faith (from left) Steve Winwood, Ric Grech, Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton in 1969.

BLIND FAITH BEGIN TO STIR

FEBRUARY 8 It's reported that ex-Cream men Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker will be recording with Steve Winwood when a suitable studio becomes available. Clapton tells NME they've been rehearsing at Winwood's cottage in Berkshire. Of his reunion with Baker, he adds, "we simply floated back together… anyone who stood in the way of a project like this would be mad." The project, eventually named Blind Faith, manages one album and tour in the summer before splitting. Farewell Show, the film of Cream's last gig at the Royal Albert Hall, is shown at New York's Lincoln Centre on February 21: the group's scrappy farewell LP *Goodbye* is already on the US charts. In March it peaks at US Number 2 and UK Number 1.

ALSO ON!

HOOKER 'N' 'HOGS

8 John Lee Hooker (above) begins a UK tour at the Royal Festival Hall, reuniting with backing band Tony McPhee's Groundhogs. McPhee says that Hooker doesn't rehearse much, but is still looking forward to it.

HAVE A CIGAR?

8 Billboard reports that a deal between the Cuban government and French label magnate Eddie Barclay to exchange fine cigars for releasing singles by Cuban artists in Europe is off. A Havana spokesman says they need to sell them for hard currency.

SLY FLIES

9 Replacing Tommy James & The Shondells' Crimson And Clover, Sly And The Family Stone's Everyday People peaks at US Number 1. The band's fourth LP *Stand!* is out in April.

T.REX MEET BOWIE

15 Tyrannosaurus Rex begin a British tour at Birmingham Town Hall. Support comes from "catalyst" John Peel, Lithuanian-Australian sitar player Vytas Šerelis and one David Bowie, who performs a mime about China's invasion of Tibet.

JIMI'S FAREWELL

24 The Jimi Hendrix Experience play their last UK show at the Royal Albert Hall, supported by Van der Graaf Generator and Fat Mattress. Afterwards Hendrix jams at the Speakeasy. Two days earlier the NME reported his wish to play an outdoor concert where nakedness would be encouraged. "Today, there's too much hang-up on clothes," he argues.

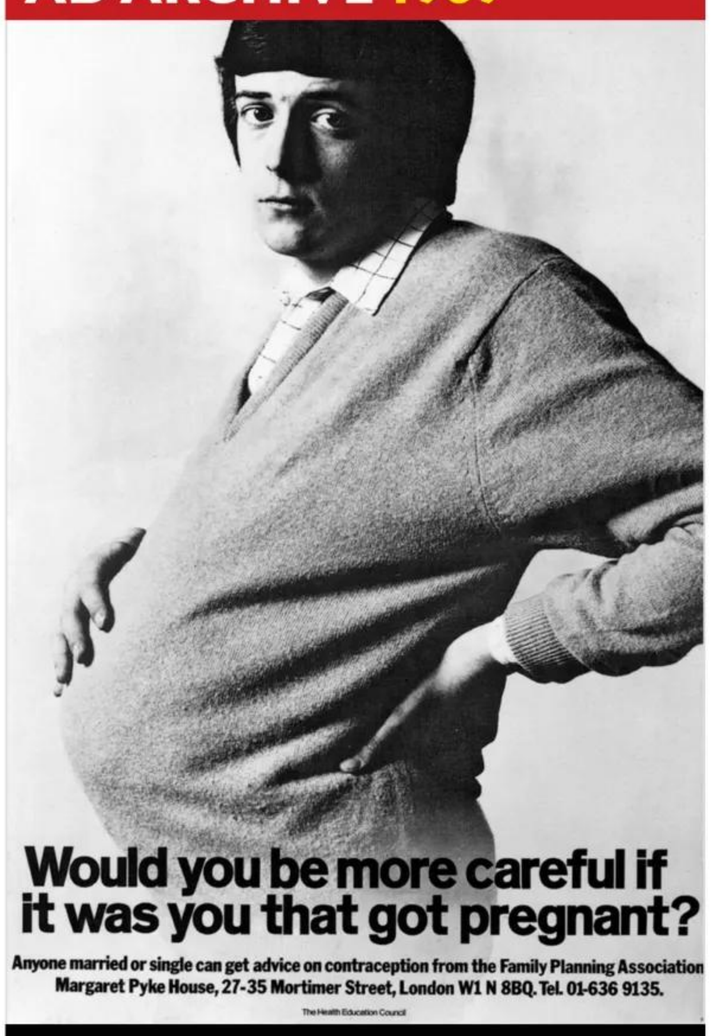
TOP TEN

BLUEBEAT HOT 10 SINGLES **FEBRUARY 8**

1. **EVERYBODY NEEDS LOVE** SLIM SMITH UNITY
2. **RIVER TO THE BANK** DERRICK MORGAN CRAB
3. **LAST FLIGHT TO REGGAE CITY** TOMMY McCOOK & STRANGER COLE UNITY
4. **BANGARANG** LESTER STERLING & STRANGER COLE UNITY
5. **REGGAE HIT THE TOWN** THE ETHIOPIANS CRAB
6. **SEVEN LETTERS** DERRICK MORGAN CRAB
7. **REGGAY IN THE WIND** LESTER STERLING GAS
8. **RHYTHM HIPS** RONALD RUSSELL NU BEAT
9. **WOPPI KING/ MR SOUL** LAUREL AITKEN NU BEAT
10. **PUSH PUSH** THE TERMITES NU BEAT

Cat in the hat: Derrick Morgan in at 2 and 6!

AD ARCHIVE 1969



Ad agency Cramer Saatchi say it loud for the post-Pill generation. The expectant dude asked to remain anonymous – his mum was a Catholic.

ASK MOJO

Clone rangers: (clockwise from top left) The shoeless Doobie Brothers in 1976; MOJO May 2006's cover-mounted CD; Elvis with gold lamé suit designer Nudie Cohn; various homages to the King's iconic 1959 LP sleeve; Iggy Pop in the raw.

Who did lookalike sleeves?

Let us answer your musical questions and settle rock-related argument once and for all.

The newspaper-style cover of 1961 album *The Nat Gonella Story* by Nat Gonella And His Band seems to provide the template for a certain ex-Beatle's album sleeve from 11 years later (the newspaper-inspired *Some Time In New York City* by John & Yoko/Plastic Ono Band). No doubt it's all just a big coincidence, but I wonder if your readers have noticed any other unlikely doppelgängers in the world of sleeve design?

Paul Slade, London

MOJO says: The world of lookalike LP covers is huge and intimidating indeed, with a list of Beatles knock-offs as long as your goo goo g'joob: see Zappa mimicking *Sgt. Pepper's* with *We're Only In It For The Money*, The Residents spoofing *Meet The Beatles*, and Macca himself returning to *Abbey Road* for 1993's *Paul Is Live*, among many other examples. Other popular LP cover homages include both Elvis Presley's first LP (The Clash's *London Calling* and B.A.D.'s *F-Punk* both borrowed the typography) and *50,000,000 Elvis Fans Can't Be Wrong*, which got re-purposed for albums and best-ofs by Rod Stewart, Bon Jovi and The Fall; Herb Alpert & The Tijuana Brass's *Whipped Cream And Other Delights* (see Soul Asylum's *Clam Dip And Other Delights* for a different flavour); Sinatra's *In The Wee Small Hours* (which was referenced by Tom Waits and Willie Nelson); assorted Blue Note sleeves (Joe Jackson's *Body And Soul* is much indebted to *Sonny Rollins, Vol. 2*) and various permutations of the Sex Pistols' *Never Mind The Bollocks* (Sore Throat's *Never Mind The Napalm Here's Sore Throat* springs to mind). More particular emulations include Matt Johnson's *Burning Blue Soul* and *The Psychedelic Sounds Of The 13th Floor Elevators*; Lorde's *Solar Power* and Free's self-titled second LP; Cheap Trick's *Next Position Please* and Springsteen's *Born To Run*; Aimee Mann's *Avalanche* and *Songs Of Love And Hate* by Leonard Cohen (see also Len's *Greatest Hits* and Ween's *The Pod*); Tone-Lōc's *Lōc-ed After Dark* and Donald Byrd's *A New Perspective*, and Sleater-Kinney's *Dig Me Out*'s eerie mirroring of The Kinks' *The Kink Kontroversy*. We could go on, but please send us your favourite examples. And excuse us while we go looking for more newsprint-inspired LP art.

Getty, Alamy (2)

DID TERRY HALL WORK WITH BARRY MANILOW?

News of Barry Manilow's farewell tour of the UK reminded me that he was once meant to collaborate with Terry Hall. Is anything else known about this unusual team-up?

Craig Williams, via e-mail

MOJO says: In a 2014 interview, Terry Hall recalled that, "it was when I was working with Dave Stewart [in the early-'90s in the group Vegas]. We were trying to come up with ideas for a new sort of musical. It was really good fun. There wasn't like a set story, we were just wondering where we should go with it. Dave said, 'Who do you think should sing that song?' And I said, Probably Barry Manilow. He called me back about an hour later and said, 'I've got Barry Manilow on the phone.' We met him and he was running through this song that we did, The Trouble With Lovers, [but] he was saying, 'Why would I want to talk about Jackie Onassis?' He thought he was being set up – we were filming it, not for horrible reasons, but this was doing his head in. I think he felt like he was on, not You've Been Framed, one of them [programmes], but it wasn't." And so the project went no further. You can still listen to The Trouble With Lovers on Vegas's 1992 LP, though, and imagine Barry singing it.

STAR CO-WRITES REVISITED

Re: Whose inter-group co-writes were cut by both composers' bands? (Ask MOJO 360) You give a mention to What A Fool Believes written by Michael McDonald and Kenny Loggins. McDonald must have enjoyed this kind of association since he co-wrote You Belong To Me with Carly Simon, a US Top 10 hit for her and also on The Doobie Brothers' *Livin' On The Fault Line* LP. A later, live version, was released as a single by the Doobies in 1983.

Alan Mannings, Southern River, Western Australia

MOJO says: Thanks, Alan! And also to reader Andy Cahn, who reports that Madonna and her brother-in-law Joe Henry co-wrote a song that they each recorded with different titles – Madonna's Don't Tell Me (2000) and Joe Henry's Stop (2001). Cliff Morgan, meanwhile, points out Short And Sweet, a David Gilmour/Roy Harper composition that Gilmour recorded for his self-titled 1978 solo album, and which Harper included on 1980's *The Unknown Soldier*, with Gilmour on guitar.

HELP MOJO

What's the most radical remixing/remastering job on a classic album? Asking after comparing the original David Bowie production of The Stooges' *Raw Power* with Iggy's remix from 1997 (I prefer the Bowie mix in case you're wondering).

Chris Davis, via e-mail

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

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Retailing at £250, we have TWO sets up for grabs for this month's crossword prize.

How to enter: take the letters from each coloured square and rearrange them to form the name of a musician. Visit www.mojo4music.com/crossword and fill out the form, along with your answer, in the provided field. Entry is free and closes at midnight on **March 2, 2024**. Winners are selected at random. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com

Getty (3)

ANSWERS

MOJO 362

Across: 1 Robert Calvert, 8 Moog, 10 Close To Me, 11 Homeless, 12 Audience, 14 Diamond Dogs, 15 Rye, 16 Daydream, 17 Dashiki, 18 Main, 19 Ash, 20 RCA, 21 Jamaican, 22 Oran, 24 Dana, 27 Feline, 28 One, 30 Chords 32 Lull, 34 Exile, 35 EE, 37 Galveston, 38 SST, 39 Eels, 40 Delta, 41 R.E.M., 42 EP, 44 Red, 46 AOR, 47 Ace, 48 Cherish. 50 ICB, 51 Raiders, 52 BÖC, 53 Kleptomania, 54 EVOL, 57 Linn. 58 Hood, 60 Dirge, 61 Erotic, 62 Rico

Down: 1 Rockin Dead, 2 Brownie McGhee, 3 Reefer Man, 4 Crowded House, 5 Lee Marshall, 6 Ethiopia, 7 Tom Adair, 8 Mellow Madness, 9 Obsession, 13 Una Baines, 23 Della Reese, 26 Alan Price, 27 Flat, 29 Extreme, 30 Clem Cattini, 31 Riser, 33 Ugly Kid Joe, 36 Ed Thrasher, 38 Shack, 43 Pioneers, 45 Disco, 46 ABBA, 49 El Mundo, 55 Väth, 56 Luco, 59 Dry

Winners: Mike Hill of **Bishop's Stortford**, **Susi Southworth** of **Manchester**, **Michael Bruce** of **Glasgow**, **Rod Shore** of **Reading** and **Kathy Clarke** of **Birkenhead** win Audiomovers innovations memberships. Kathy also wins a set of the new KRK CLASSIC 5 studio monitors.

ACROSS

1 See photoclue A (4,6)
5 Sevenoaks techno duo whose first hit was Chime (7)
10 The Beatles in a blue mood (2,4)
11 The Doors' jewelled vessel (7,4)
13 Lisa Gerrard's group Microfilm almost cover J. Geils Band? (10)
15 Ramblin' --------- (Bob Seger System) (7,3)
16 Bowie's peckish company (6,3)
18 Pearl Jam's 1991 debut (3)
19 Bonnie Tyler suffered a complete one, heart-wise (7)
21 Music made by two turntables and a microphone? (3)
23 SLF's was Alternative (6)
24 Supergroup formed by Steve Howe, Carl Palmer etc. (4)
25 Belgian resort where Marvin Gaye recuperated in the early '80s (6)
28 In short, Incredible String Band (1,1,1)
29 Pete Waterman's hit-making label (1,1,1)
31 Queen's enormous 1985 Brazil gig, on film (4,2,3)
35 Peggy Lee gets the lurgy (5)
36 Bow Wow Wow salute a great ape (9)
37 Song title used by The Monkees, Kiss and Green Day (3)
38 Mad Mike Banks' Detroit enigmas (2)
39 Cozy Powell said it thrice in 1974 (2)
40 Thin Lizzy's shade of green (7)
42 Frizzell, Wilbury or Scissors For… (5)
43 Stephen O'Malley's 2013 cassette – in a limited edition of 13 (8)
45 The Bunnymen stalk the tundra in '05 (7)
49 Purveyors of Le Freak (4)
51 Felt's debut single, likened to Manuel from Fawlty Towers' guitar playing (5)
52 Texas country outlaw (3,5)
53 See photoclue B (5)
54 Ray Barretto trips in '68? (4)
55 "That's not to say/That there's anything wrong with being a cow anyway." (Julian Cope) (7,5)
56 Steve Hillage's proggers who recorded *Space Shanty* in '72 (4)
57 Shh! It's a Joe South-penned hit for the Purps (4)
58 Peterson, Brown Jr or Hammerstein (5)

DOWN

1 The Who's call for unity (4,8)
2 Turin Brakes member who moonlights as a jazz bassist (5,4)
3 The Stooges' first pre-break up LP (3,5)
4 Tom Rush song covered by The Walker Brothers in '75 (2, 7)
6 "You guys might see my smile/It'll be, like, ----------." (Frank & Moon Zappa's Valley Girl) (6,4)
7 Cypress Hill go out of their heads (6,2,3,5)
8 Eric Burdon's pack, The ------- (7)
9 Bill Withers' second-biggest US hit (3,2)
12 Lou Adler's post-Dunhill label (3)
14 Peter Tosh's clarion call from '77 (5,6)
17 Players of this guitar include Mark Knopfler, Son House and Dan Auerbach (8)
20 Pre-Tucky Buzzard group The --- (3)
22 Mind the funk Band formed by the Wilson brothers Ronnie, Charlie and Robert (3)
24 David Gilmour's second solo LP (5,4)
26 Elliott Smith's was in the hay (6)
27 The Cars' Benjamin --- (3)
30 Mavis Staples' album with Ben Harper (2,3,2)
32 See photoclue C (5,6)
33 Hunter, Astbury or Gillan (3)
34 Small Faces' song for a restful weekend (4,6)
41 Take This Job And Shove It was the biggest hit for Johnny -------- (8)
43 Prog band which hatched from Uriel (3)
44 Walkabouts mainman Chris ------(6)
46 Stiff/Radar/F-Beat/Demon label mover and Costello manager, Jake ------- (7)
47 Clock DVA's Mr Newton (3)
48 Randy Bachman comes out swinging in '70 (3)
50 AFKAP gives it to you straight in '95 (1,4,1)
54 Shel Talmy meets Manfred Mann in '66 (2,2)

HELLO GOODBYE

"Whose round is it, anyway?": Happy Mondays (clockwise from left) Shaun Ryder, Paul Davis, Paul Ryder, Mark 'Bez' Berry, Mark Day, Gary Whelan, 1986.

Shaun Ryder and Happy Mondays

It flared up in north Manchester. Then drugs and the green-eyed monster ended it.

HELLO 1983

I watched [David Essex-starring cautionary yarn] That'll Be The Day and Stardust on a double bill in '75 and I thought, I fancy some of that rock'n'roll lifestyle. Me and our Matt [Ryder, brother] formed a group… well, we had a name – Avant-Garde – which we then changed to No Exit, and Matt got us a support slot with Salford Jets. This was around '79, but we had no instruments or songs and we were rubbish.

It changed overnight when my dad [Derek] bought our kid [Paul] a bass. He learned quickly and we started recruiting band members. I was the singer because I was the best of the bunch at singing, although I saw myself more like Bob Dylan than a singer-singer. We rehearsed twice a week, did Joy Division covers and demos. My dad got us a 4-track, and the first ones were Comfort And Joy, Red, The Egg and Delightful. They had something but we weren't there yet.

Dad drove us around, got us amps, did our sound. Our first gig was at Wardley Community Centre in Swinton. We did this cheesy Battle Of The Bands contest in Blackpool and the Gallery in Manchester, which got us our first listing in the Manchester Evening News.

Kevin Cummins/Getty, John Stoddart/Getty

"The stories are exaggerated, but yes, I sold my clothes for crack."
SHAUN RYDER

We got a few labels up from London checking us out but they said we needed an image. We were wearing hoodies, trainers and we were the first to wear flares, we got them off Phil Saxe's stall on the underground market in Manchester. He knew [Factory A&R] Mike Pickering, and he started managing us. Not long after that, this kid came round the house, Mark Berry – Bez – with this mutual acquaintance. That was the final piece. We got a gig at the Haçienda and I invited him up on-stage. The Beatles had Stu Sutcliffe. Bez was my Stu. I get asked a lot, "Did you think you'd still be doing it now?" But I did, I was serious from the start.

GOODBYE FEBRUARY 1993

Jealousy is a fucking horrible thing. My brother [Paul], Gaz Whelan [drums], Paul Davis [keyboards] and Mark Day [guitar] were jealous of me and Bez. We did all the press – we didn't want to, but they couldn't be bothered – and so we got the attention, we were on the magazine front covers, and they wanted that. They'd be talking about going off and doing their own thing, so we were already having a wobble before we did [1992's] …*Yes Please!* with Chris [Frantz] and Tina [Weymouth] in Barbados.

Chris and Tina were the wrong producers for us. We were going backwards with them, wanking away on a drum solo or guitar lick for three days. I couldn't write lyrics to that. The stories are exaggerated, but yes, I sold my clothes for crack. The dealers were all walking around in Armani jeans and caps and Hugo Boss T-shirts, but the whole holding-the-master-tapes-for-ransom thing, that wasn't my idea.

When …*Yes Please!* came out, it got bad reviews. [Previous albums] *Bummed* and *Pills 'N' Thrills And Bellyaches* were groundbreaking. …*Yes Please!* was average. They blamed that on me taking crack, but it wasn't that. The album was average because we'd worked with the wrong producers and we weren't inspired.

It ended up with [the rest of the group] saying they would rather be on the dole than work with me. Me and Bez begged them to stay, we were a bunch of mates, a gang, but they thought they could do better without me [Ryder infamously walked out of a big-money meeting with EMI to sign the Mondays to "get some Kentucky Fried Chicken"].

So I started working with Kermit [Paul Leveridge] and we got Black Grape together. Our first album, [1995's] *It's Great When You're Straight… Yeah*, that's what …*Yes Please!* should have sounded like. It hit Number 1 and I had my revenge. They all did fucking nothing after Happy Mondays. All they did was destroy a band.

Lois Wilson

Black Grape's Orange Head is out now on DGAFF. Happy Mondays tour the UK from March.

The 24-Hour Party's over: the Mondays (from left) Davis, Bez, Ryder, Whelan, Paul Ryder and Day towards the end; (left) Shaun today.

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